PLAY

THE POLICE
MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

THE DARKNESS
I BELIEVE IN A THING...

THE BLACK KEYS
WILD CHILD

TOTAL GUITAR

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IT'S GETTING LOUD AGAIN...

Jack White

"My guitar playing is better than ever!"

IN DEPTH
JACK'S TONE AND TECHNIQUE

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HIS WEIRD WORLD OF GEAR

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REVIEWED
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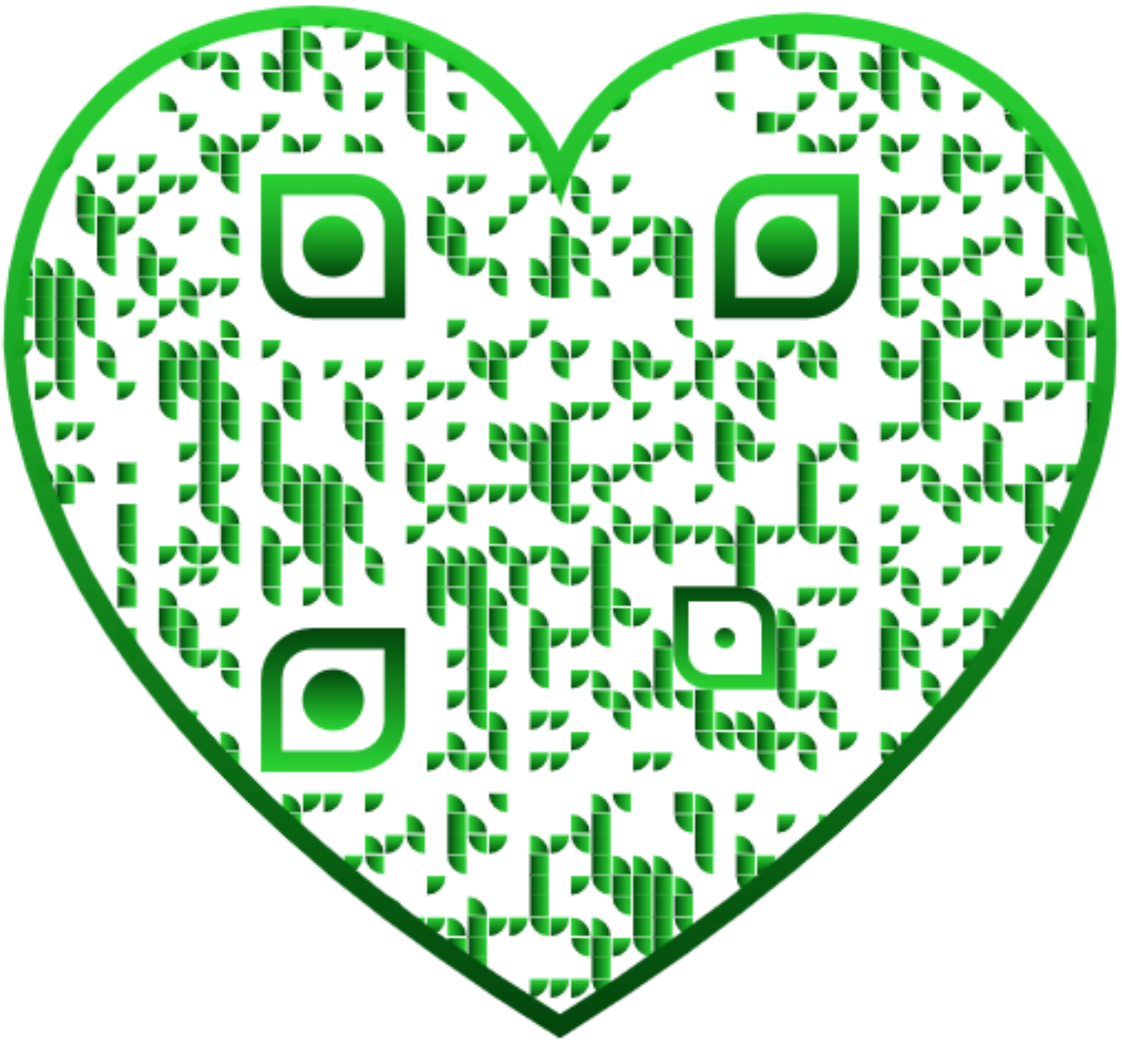
A RETRO FUTURE CLASSIC?

DEF LEPPARD
MOLLY TUTTLE
FANTASTIC NEGRITO
MASTER YOUR DELAY



ARTIST SIGNATURE

ANGEL VIVALDI

SAVAGE ELEGANCE

PRO-MOD DK24-6 NOVA

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Welcome...

While putting this month's cover feature together, it struck me just how inseparable Jack White's technique is from his tone. Perhaps this is true of any guitarist, but I think it's especially so with Jack. To the extent that if you want to try and play like him you may not get his feel, or you may even struggle to play the part if you haven't dialled in a ballpark tone.

Of course his trademark tones come, by and large, from a blend of pitch shifters and raucous fuzz distortion (we'll reveal his methods later on!). His killswitch-style 'stutter' rhythm technique on *Ball And Biscuit* and *Black Math* relies on a heavily compressed fuzz tone. His bluesy staccato soloing on tracks like *Lazaretto* also benefits from a similar setup. A classic smooth overdrive just won't do, or so it seems.

Clearly Jack is an ingenious musician who has employed creative and unusual methods in the pursuit of his art. So I'm particularly excited this month to bring you our interview with the man himself. He talks us through the songwriting process for his latest albums *Fear Of The Dawn* and *Entering Heaven Alive*, and discusses his approaches to gear and more.

Elsewhere in the issue we speak to Bloc Party's Russell Lissack who tells us about the hundred or so pedals he took to the studio to record the band's latest album. You can get to grips with some bluegrass basics with our easy lesson and some inspiration from Molly Tuttle. Def Leppard's Phil Collen and Vivian Campbell give us their tips on how to write a rock anthem. And with all our usual reviews and songs to learn it's a packed issue.

Chris Bird Editor

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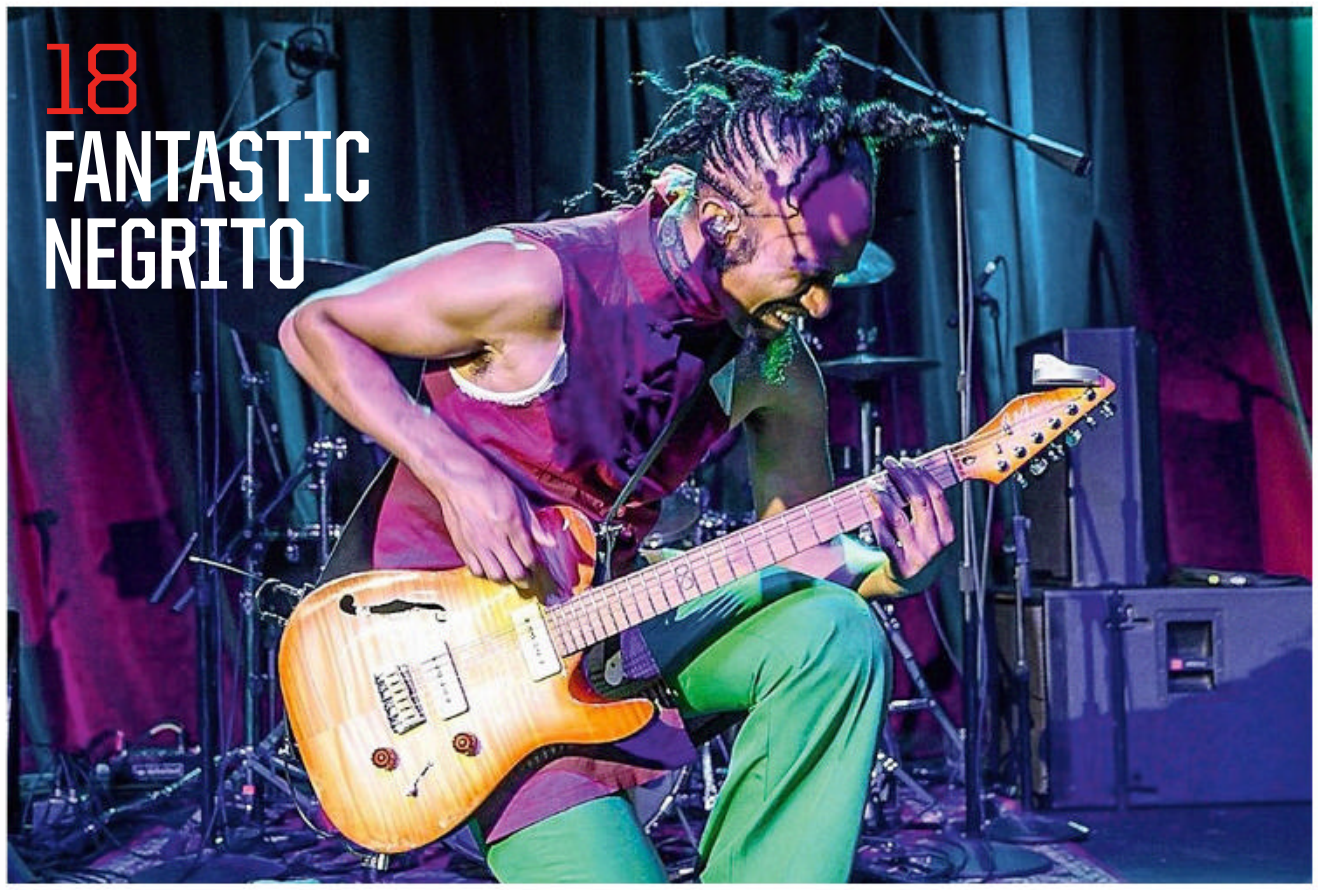
Cover image Eleanor Jane



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Words Paul Elliott **Photo** Roberto Finizio / Getty

DOWN THE LINE...

1 8 months ago, Conor Curley of Fontaines D.C. told TG: "We're not great musicians but we can play a three chord song and give it some welly!" So much has changed since then. The two-guitar partnership between Conor and Carlos O'Connell has reached a new level on the Irish band's new album *Skinty Fia*, leading to comparisons with some of the greatest guitar groups of all time – from Joy Division and The Smiths to The Stone Roses and Oasis. This photo of Conor is from the Fontaines' recent gig on March 23, 2022 at the Alcatraz club in Milan, Italy.

SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS

TEAM SPIRIT
Etta Friedman (left) and Allegra Weingarten

BAND

"WE HAVE NO AMPS – AND CRAPPY GUITARS!"

INSIDE THE LO-FI WORLD OF ALT-ROCKERS **MOMMA**

Words Ellie Rogers

Inspired by Nirvana, The Smashing Pumpkins and Veruca Salt, LA band Momma party like it's 1995 on their new album *Household Name*. And when it comes to gear, guitarist/vocalist duo Etta Friedman and Allegra Weingarten aren't fussy...

How would you describe your sound?
Allegra: It's alternative rock with grungy influences. Someone once said that we were neo-grunge, which we thought was really funny. I'm down for that comparison, but we don't really listen to much grunge besides Nirvana, so I don't know how fair it'd be to call ourselves that.

***Household Name* is your third record, but is the first you've recorded in a studio. What was that like?**
Etta: We had all of the gear at our disposal, so that was super fun. Our bass player and producer Aron [Kobayashi Ritch] is super savvy, so it was exciting to not just be in his bedroom being like, 'I wanna get this Pumpkins sound!' We could actually sit and pull three different amps and however many pedal combinations until we got a sound to our liking.

What tones did you find that you really love?
Allegra: I had never heard of this pedal before, and I'm probably going to butcher what it was, but it was this really big Boss Chorus pedal. It's apparently super rare and costs $700. We used it for the solo on *Rockstar*. That was one of those things where we didn't know what it needed until we plugged that in.

What are your guitar collections like?
Allegra: Pretty slim. My first guitar was a Mexican Fender Strat that my Dad bought me. Then my Grandma, when I graduated college, wanted to buy me a guitar and I ended up choosing a Gibson SG, which was my ode to Veruca Salt. That's what I'm playing now. I have a really nice Martin acoustic back home that's probably one of my favourite guitars ever. It was left out in the rain the first day, and I swear to God, it sounds perfect!
Etta: My brother got me a cheap Fender Duo-Sonic off Sweetwater that someone changed the pickups on. It's one humbucker and one single coil, so you can get a versatile sound. It's kind of a crappy guitar but I love it.

Do you have favourite amps?
Allegra: So, we don't have amps! It's kind of been the Momma 'bit' for years – us going: 'Hey, can we use your backline?' But we talked about it on tour very seriously and we're gonna get two Fender Deluxe Reverbs, and everyone's gonna be happy.

What do you admire most about each other's playing?
Etta: Allegra is my biggest inspiration. We're so different but also symbiotic. Allegra's just a shredder!
Allegra: Etta's very good at having really emotive guitar parts that are on the gloomier, more edgy side. I tend to lean towards poppy, melody-driven parts, and when you put it together, that's where you get the marriage!

AMPLIFIER

KING POWER!

A brand new amp from Orange, The Marcus King MK Ultra is a 30-watt, all-valve head, equipped with two 12AX7 preamp valves, and a pair of 6L6s in the output. Controls are limited to Volume, Sing (treble) and Deep (bass), with Orange saying it's designed to work with your guitar and pedals to help shape the tone rather than "sit on top of it". As blues-rock maestro Marcus says: "For me to have a signature amp with Orange is just like a childhood dream that's come true. It's a uniquely crafted American amplifier by a British company for a uniquely crafted American man." It's out now for £2,400.

OVERDRIVE

TEXAS HEAT!

Fancy channeling Billy Gibbons' tones from ZZ Top's 70s classic *Tres Hombres*? Well, thanks to J. Rockett, now you can. The El Hombre isn't a signature pedal, but it is based on getting you in reach of Billy's ballpark. J. Rockett is calling it a Texas Heat overdrive, and as such the El Hombre promises to take you from "mild to wild" with its amp-like harmonics and dynamic response. The three-control layout features gain and volume, with the tone renamed as 'bite'. When fully open, J. Rockett says it'll give you aggressive drive, but with the bite dialled back it's a smoother, Dumble style sound.

The El Hombre is available now, priced at £199.

SCREAMER!

CARRY ON SCREAMING!

Continuing its more affordable, utilitarian 3 Series range of pedals, JHS has set its sights on the Tube Screamer for the latest addition to the line-up. With its DNA coming from JHS' 2008 Strong Mod pedal, it's an affordable re-working of the classic Tube Screamer design, which JHS says refines the circuit to give a "much cleaner and overall more powerful tone" with more clean headroom, better suitability when used as a boost and versatile tone and gain controls.

As with all JHS 3 Series pedals, this one's available for £99.

THEM TONES!

EPIPHONE UNVEILS A BRACE OF JERRY CANTRELL LES PAULS

Last year, we rejoiced at the release of a Gibson's Jerry Cantrell 'Wino' Les Paul Custom, then subsequently recoiled upon hearing the bittersweet news that this Tom Murphy-aged beauty was going to retail circa £8000, and even if we could spare a kidney, there were only 100 being made!

So, if you missed out on Tom & Jerry's fantastic recreation of the Alice In Chains man's No.1 Les Paul, you'll be glad to hear that Epiphone has stepped up with not one, but two Jerry Cantrell signature models.

First up is an Epiphone version of the Jerry Cantrell Wino, and it's released alongside the Jerry Cantrell Les Paul Custom Prophecy. We'll start with the familiar Wino, which is made from the classic LP recipe of a mahogany neck and mahogany body capped with a layer of maple.

In this case, just as with the Gibson Custom version, the body features Gibson/Epiphone's standard 9-hole weight relief with a series of cut-outs under the maple cap to make things lighter, and the neck has been carved to Jerry's Custom Cantrell profile.

Elsewhere, we get Les Paul Custom staples such as block inlays, and a split-diamond on the headstock, while JC's name is etched onto the truss rod cover and the rear of the headstock features his logo. Hardware-wise there's an Epiphone LockTone Tune-O-Matic bridge and stop bar, and a set of Grover RotoMatic, 18:1 tuners keeps things stable at the other end.

At a glance, the Epiphone Wino is similar to the Custom version, but this is actually where the biggest difference in spec lies. The hen's tooth version featured one gold-covered Gibson 490R in the neck position, and an open-coil 498T in the bridge, which Epiphone has recreated with an Alnico Classic PRO and 98T PRO, respectively. But this Wino forgoes the Fishman Powerbridge under-saddle pickup, meaning that we get the two humbuckers, and a standard two-volume/two-tone/three-way switch control layout.

While it shares many of the same base ingredients (mahogany body/maple top and a mahogany 'Custom Cantrell' neck), the Epiphone Jerry Cantrell Les Paul Custom Prophecy is a more modern take on the LPC format. First, it comes in the icy Bone White finish, and the body has undergone Epiphone's Ultra Modern weight relief. This goes a step further by removing wedges around the whole of the body outline to bring the weight down. The contrasting ebony 'board is decorated with circle-in-diamond inlays, and it's got 24 frets vs the Wino's 22. Once again, the electronics are swapped, this time for Fishman Fluence models, offering PAF or modern voicings, plus coil splits on both from the push-pull controls. Both guitars come with a custom hardshell case. Keep an eye out for a review coming soon!

Stuart Williams

Words Stuart Williams Photography Phil Barker

BRIGHT SPARK

Positive Grid's Spark Mini shrinks the company's award-winning practice amp

The Positive Grid Spark brought new life to the practice amp market upon its arrival, but the company is looking to change the game once more with the Spark Mini – a pint-sized version of the Spark that goes small on footprint, but remains big on features.

For the uninitiated, the Spark is a modelling amp housing 33 amps, 43 effects alongside Bluetooth and USB connectivity, and the Spark Mini boasts the same head count. The difference is, it's clocking in at just 146.5 x 123 x 165mm, runs off a rechargeable battery, and has minimal controls. On the top panel, there are controls for your guitar level, incoming audio level and a selector for one of four presets. That's because it's largely controlled by a smartphone or tablet, allowing for deep editing and access to thousands of presets.

But as well as the gear-based tech, there's a whole world of innovation going on to help you immerse yourself in doing what we're all here to do – play more! The Auto Chords function can figure out the chords for any song you want to throw at it, while Smart Jam will generate a bass and drum backing track to suit the style you play. Also within the Spark app is a video recording feature which works with your device's camera, making it easy to capture you playing and upload it to social media.

The Spark Mini is available to order now, with prices currently cut from $229 to $195 at the time of writing. We'll have a full review for you soon.

UP CLOSE

Smart features

Whether you're learning songs or coming up with new licks, the Spark's Auto Chords and Smart Jam features will have you covered.

Connectivity

The Spark Mini works as a full-range Bluetooth speaker as well as an amp, plus there's USB which allows it to act as your audio interface for recording.

Modelling

As well as the next-level features, the Spark Mini is well stocked with 33 amp models and 43 effects, unlocked by the Spark app.

HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Funk-style strumming
- ✔ G natural minor scale
- ✔ Powerchord shapes

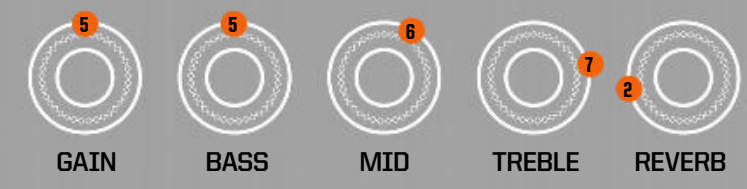
RIFF OF THE MONTH

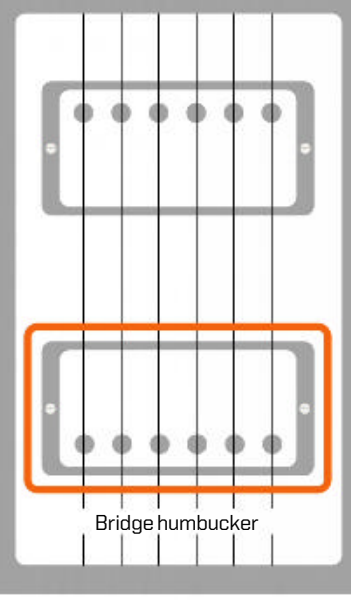
THE BLACK KEYS

Wild Child

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE





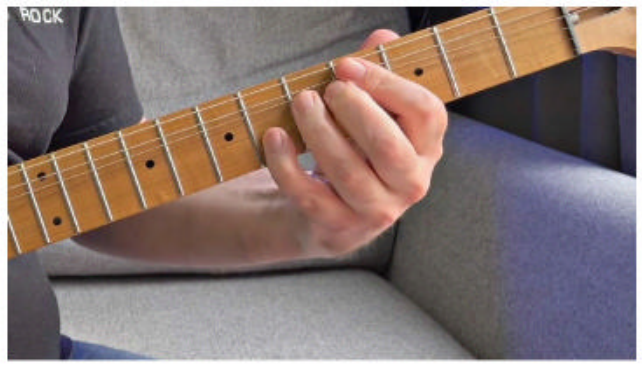
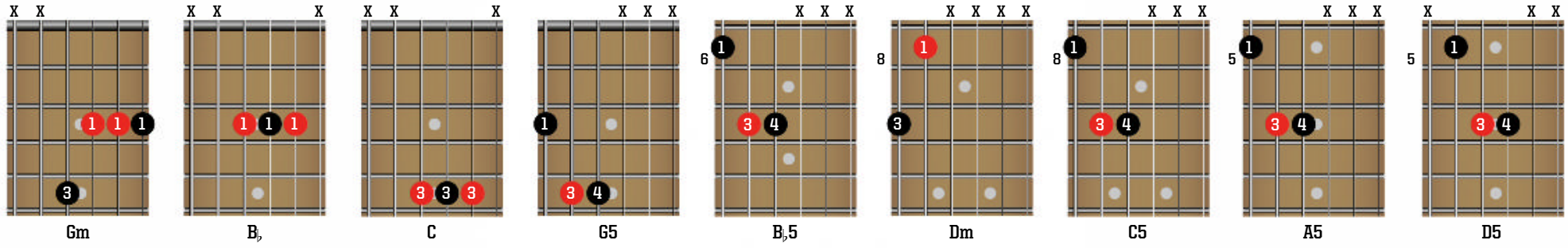
Dan Auerbach has a large collection of vintage gear, and he's known to gig with different amps and guitars compared to what he records with in the studio. He's also known for using a multi-amp setup. All this makes recreating his sound almost impossible – so, really, you're aiming for a broadly authentic tone. Humbuckers or single-coil pickups could work. We'd opt for a warm Fender style valve amp set with a little drive just on the verge of breakup. For the heavier riff, a fuzz pedal like an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff will give you some vintage-style distortion.

Wild Child is the first single from The Black Keys' 11th studio album *Dropout Boogie*, which comes a year after the release of the Mississippi blues-inspired covers album *Delta Kream*.

Black Keys frontman Dan Auerbach begins the song with a Nile Rodgers-esque funky riff using Gm, B♭ and C triads around the 3rd to 5th frets. The funkiness comes from the strumming motion, so keep your pick moving down and up with 16th-note timing.

The next part features distorted powerchords on the lower strings: G5, B♭5, C5 and A5 have their root notes on the sixth string, and there's a D5 built on the fifth string. The odd chord out (coming in after the B♭5) is a D minor diad played at the 10th fret, sixth string and 8th fret, fifth string. Watch our slowed-down video to see how all these elements fit together.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00–0:19
Tempo: 108bpm
Key/scale: G minor
Main techniques: Rhythmic strumming, powerchords, string bending



The opening funky chords (Gm, B♭ and C) are found within the G minor pentatonic box shape, with the string bend lick played on the second and third strings.

The powerchord section uses the notes on the lowest strings in 'root-5th-octave' shapes. There is one instance of a D minor diad, too.

Photo Getty

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FIRST STEPS IN GUITAR...

BENDS AND PULL-OFFS

To save Paul from death by repetition, Jenna adds new techniques to his repertoire, which can help riffs already learned feel fresher and sound better

In the third month learning, Paul is discovering what everyone does: mastering guitar basics takes a while. That means going back over the same stuff again and again. Young kids might be happy with endless repetition (as you'll know if you've ever asked one to pick a movie), but for most learners it's important to find new twists to keep things fresh. You can think of learning like a spiral: you return to the same concepts regularly, but you're a bit further up each time. This month's riff uses the E minor pentatonic scale again, but we're adding new techniques in the form of string bends and pull-offs.

TEACHER

JENNA SCARAMANGA
Jenna has taught guitar for 15 years at music colleges, schools, and IGF summer camps. She studied with Guthrie Govan at BIMM, and was classic rock columnist for TG's sister magazine *Guitar Techniques*.

STUDENT

PAUL ELLIOTT
Paul has written about music since 1985 for various titles including *Sounds*, *Kerrang!*, *Q*, *MOJO* and *Classic Rock*. Among the many guitarists he has interviewed are Slash, Angus Young, Keith Richards and Jimmy Page.

JENNA SAYS...

I've been talking to Paul about 'ending with a win': making sure he always succeeds at something just before he puts the guitar down. That way he finishes with a positive feeling and he's going to be more motivated to pick the guitar up again. As teacher, my job is to keep those wins coming thick and fast by choosing the right material. Paul could take on more complex riffs now, and he would master some with enough practice. The trouble is, there would be a lot of frustration along the way and he could easily get put off. Instead, we're doing a riff with just two notes. This reminds Paul of skills he's learned already, like picking and fretting. I've added quarter-tone bends and pull-offs. He picked up these variations quickly (two more wins), and along with a new musical example that should keep his interest up.

Words Jenna Scaramanga, Paul Elliott **Guitars and backing** Jenna Scaramanga

TECHNIQUE CHECK...

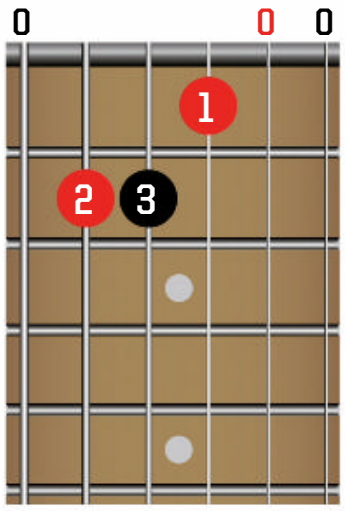
Get your fingers in the right place and your powerchords will rock!

1 QUARTER TONE BEND

To bend the low E string, pull down towards the floor. Technically, a quarter tone is halfway between frets, but the precise amount you bend is up to you.

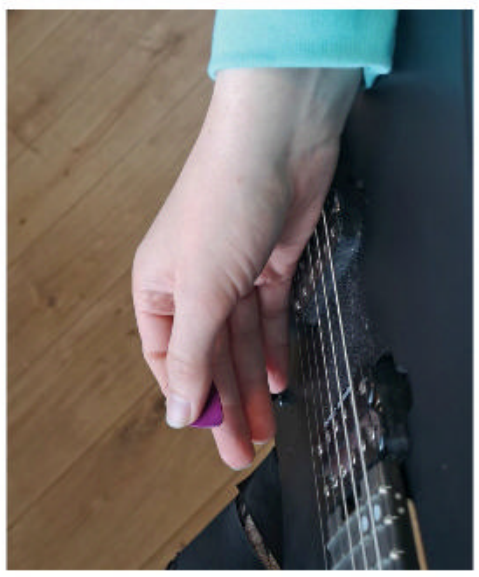
2 PULL-OFF

As you reach the end of your bend, allow the string to snap back into place from under your finger. That will make the open string sound without you having to pick it.



3 FRET-HAND MUTING

Let your first finger rest gently on the strings you're not playing. That will stop them ringing out when you don't want them to.



4 PICK-HAND MUTING

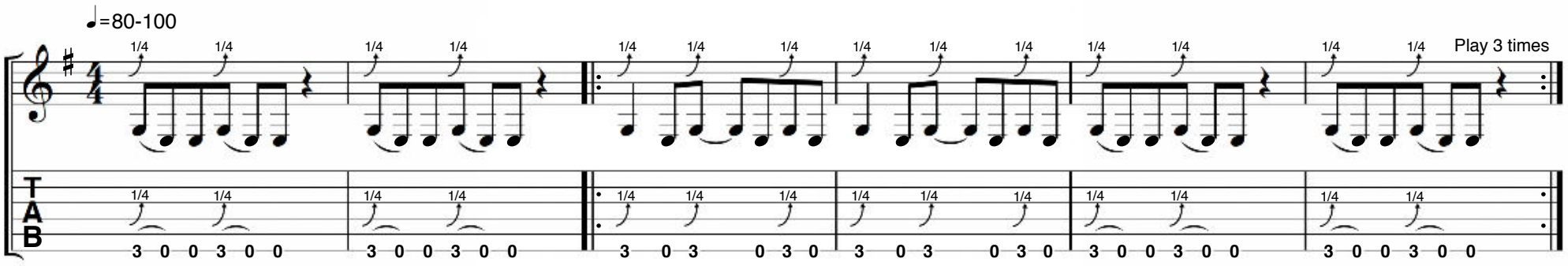
Bars 1 to 2 of our tab example have a rest on beat 4. The guitar should be silent for that, so drop your palm onto the strings to keep them quiet.

5 E MAJOR CHORD

Paul's also learning T-Rex's *20th Century Boy*, which uses the techniques from this lesson plus this chord.

TWANGY PULL-OFF RIFF

BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



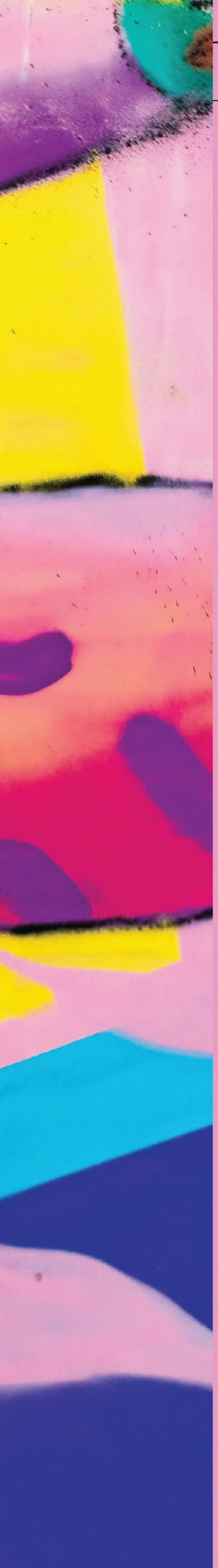
This riff has hard rhythms but the notes are simple. It's really just two riffs (bar 1 and bar 3) and it's a good idea to learn them separately. In bar 3, there's enough space for you to play more pull-offs if you like. It's up to you, as long as you stay in time!

PAUL SAYS...

It will be some time before I can say with any real confidence that I have mastered bends and pull-offs, but it was certainly a major breakthrough for me to put these things into practice. Working them into *20th Century Boy* is particularly pleasing. Makes me feel like a proper player!

And Jenna's idea of ending with a win is a great approach. It helps with my confidence and makes me want to play as much as possible.

I still have difficulty with fretting – just getting my fingers spread without deadening the strings. What helps most with this is proper placement of my thumb on the fretting hand. And as we all know, everything gets better with practice, so with that in mind I am now storing my guitar in my lounge where it is more easily accessible, so that every day I will play a little more.



Words Ellie Rogers Photos Wunmi Onibudo

"My hands feel like someone poured concrete in them!"

Fantastic Negrito had to find a new way to play guitar after he was injured in a near-fatal car crash. But he gets by – with a little help from a friend...

First discovered by many when his explosive NPR Tiny Desk Concert aired on YouTube back in 2015, Xavier Amin Dphrepaulezz – or Fantastic Negrito, as you'll more likely know him – has one of the most incredible and unique musical life stories imaginable. Indeed fantastical at times, and calamitous at others, it would probably be deemed too implausible by even the most fanciful of Hollywood movie directors – if it weren't entirely true, that is.

After growing up in an Orthodox Muslim household in Massachusetts, Xavier's cultural horizons exploded into full technicolour when he relocated to California in the 1980s, settling in "beautiful, grimy old west Oakland", as he calls it. He learned to play and write music on multiple instruments by infiltrating classes at the University Of Berkeley, and by 1993, had landed himself a million dollar deal with Interscope Records. Around this time, he met Masa Kohama – a Japanese self-taught guitarist who was living and working in L.A. at the time, and they began making music together.

Then in 1999, Xavier was involved in a near fatal car accident which left him in a coma for three weeks, and robbed him of almost all mobility in his right hand and wrist. His future as a musician seemed doomed. "I remember waking up from the coma," he says. "It was three weeks – I had a full beard, long fingernails, I weighed about a hundred pounds – and I remember, in my weak voice, I said, 'Are my hands okay?' and the nurse didn't say yes or no, she just shook her head. It was the first thing that I thought of."

In the wake of this catastrophic accident, Interscope dropped him from the label, and only after intense physical therapy was he able to begin playing music again – this time, to an audience of passersby on the subway, and for the first time, under the name of Fantastic Negrito. "I was an old guy when I decided to do this," he says. "I thought: 'No one cares about what I'm doing, I'm just going to play on the street'. I literally had no idea that I'd go on to become an artist, I just didn't care. I think there's something very powerful about not caring."

It was a long road from there. It took him until 2014 to get his first album out. But since then his profile has risen fast. He has won three Grammys. And now, he is embarking on his most ambitious project to date – begun during the pandemic, when he decided to look into his family lineage using an online ancestry tool. "I just got a little bit curious and I went down the rabbit hole – you know how that

happens on the internet." What he discovered was mind blowing: "On day two of looking into my ancestry, I find out my name's not real, my Dad was a complete liar, and on my mother's side, they came from free black folks in Virginia who came from a forbidden union of a Scottish white indentured servant and an enslaved, black African man seven generations ago."

Inspired by this discovery, Xavier set about chronicling the lives of his rebellious relatives, Elizabeth Gallimore and "Grandpa Courage," in the form of an album and accompanying film, both of which are titled *White Jesus Black Problems*. As Xavier himself puts it: "These were my relatives. That's some punk rock sh*t. I thought it explained who I was. I thought that all my life, this is why I've felt the way I've felt. So the album had to match that audacity."

In a blend of delta blues and country music, funk, soul and rock, seemingly disparate genres come together on *White Jesus Black Problems* with spectacular effect and assertiveness. "It's funny," he explains, "all of those things came from American people in the 1700s."

Guitar duties were divided between Xavier and his long-time friend and collaborator Masa Kohama, whose tasty and tasteful lead playing is all over the record. Like many of us, Masa grew up on a sonic diet of British Invasion bands like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, before maturing tastes led him towards jazz greats like Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass. He can play, it seems, just about anything.

Reflecting on how his thirty year musical partnership with Xavier now works, Masa explains, "He doesn't tell me that much about what he wants, but I can pretty much feel it because we've been doing this together for such a long time. Most of my parts on the record are just freestyle and improvised, and he ends up picking from the parts I've played."

Although most artists have recently had to adjust to remote ways of working due to Covid-19, the pair have been doing it this way for years as Masa resides in Tokyo and Xavier in California. But the distance between them has some surprising advantages. Says Masa: "I feel it's more comfortable doing it that way. Sometimes when he's standing right next to me when I'm recording, he talks too much and I get distracted. So it's better that I do my thing and he picks out what he likes."

Photo Neil Godwin

SOUL POWER
Xavier in full Fantastic Negrito regalia and (right) with Masa Kohama.

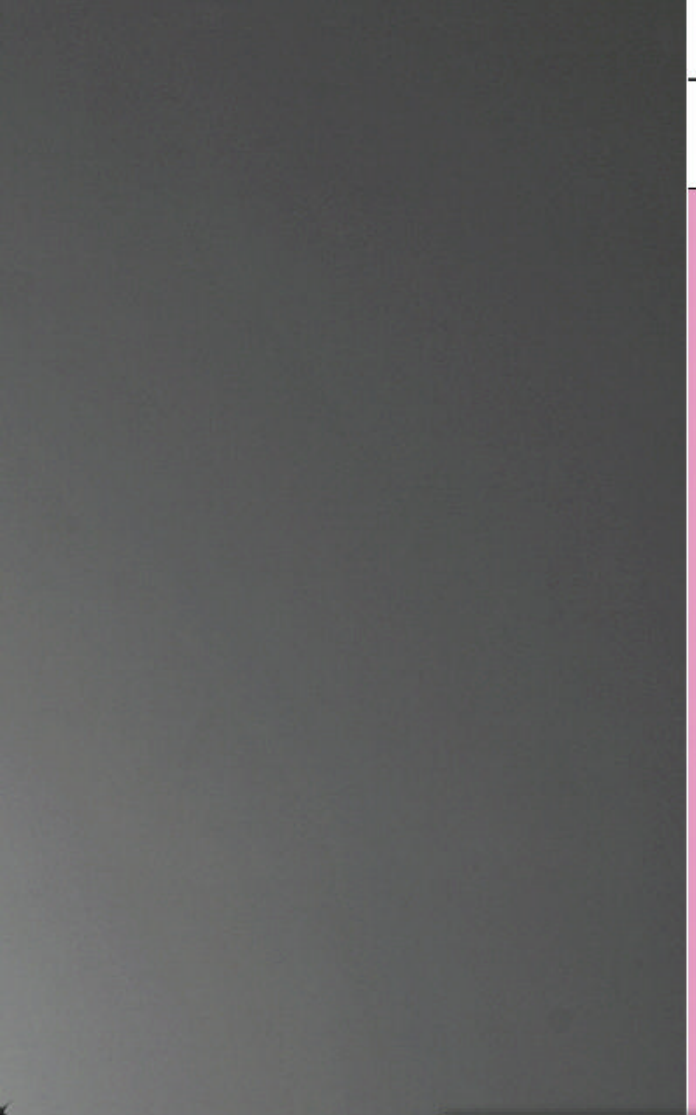
"I DO ALL THESE WEIRD RHYTHM PARTS – REALLY UGLY HACKING"

Beneath this pick and mix approach to the record's lead guitar parts lies the constant pulse of what Xavier describes as "my very clumsy rhythm." Through necessity and sheer determination since his accident, he's developed a unique strumming technique which relies less on small movements in the hand and wrist and more on larger movements of the whole right arm, with the thumb, he says, "acting kind of like this hammer".

"I do all these weird rhythm parts that give the album its feel and its personality," he explains. "The engineer always says, 'Man, if we don't have your really bad guitar, there's something missing!' It's that really ugly hacking that I do. I'm probably exaggerating, but I think there's something very unique about what I bring to all the records." Typically, Xavier will also sample Masa's improvised rhythm parts and blend them with his own to create something that he describes as both "proper" and "rugged".

Explaining the physical and mental hurdles his injuries posed, he reflects on how "It took a lot of time to get to the place where I could accept what I could and couldn't do. My thumb just doesn't move. It won't move and I just gotta accept it. My hands feel like someone poured concrete in them. They have no fluidity, so just accepting things sometimes is very powerful." Ruminating on his own experiences in relation to those of his ancestors told by the album's narrative, he adds, "It turns out that I came from generations of people like that and I just never knew."

Beyond rhythm, Xavier also laid down some lead parts on the record, including those on its heaviest track, *Man With No*



of both Grandma Gallimore and Grandpa Courage going from extreme freedom in their respective homelands, to extreme bondage in Virginia.

When it comes to the business of discussing guitars, Xavier laughs, "My guitars are usually the ones that other people don't want! But I have some really great ones as well." His rags to riches collection spans everything from a beat up $50 guitar he used busk in the subway shortly after his recovery, to a Gibson Les Paul Gold Top, a semi-hollow Chapman ML3 Pro and a classic Gibson Hummingbird acoustic.

For the album, Masa also pulled out some interesting choices, including an H.S. Anderson Mad Cat, which you'll most likely have seen before in the hands of Prince. "It's kind of like a Tele," he explains, "I didn't use this guitar on the last three albums, but I used a lot of the Mad Cat on this one – especially for those country licks and a lot of the funky rhythm stuff." For much of the bluesy lead work on tracks like *Oh Betty*, Masa channels a BB King vibe with a Gibson ES-335.

Elsewhere, he uses his own Schecter Masa Kohama Signature model – a Stratocaster-style guitar with humbuckers in the bridge and neck positions, and a single coil in the middle position. Masa was first inspired to try this configuration after seeing New York session legend and sideman to the stars, Hiram Bullock, do so back in the 1980s. Says Masa, "Nowadays, a lot of people put humbucking pickups in the front on a Strat, but in the 80s, not many people were doing that. Hiram was, and I started doing it too."

The benefit of this set-up is versatility. He explains, "I can have a fat humbucker jazzy sound, a funky trebly sound and a heavy rock sound all on the same guitar." On an album where Xavier tasked Masa with channelling so many flavours and styles, the Schecter was the perfect tool for the job.

Name – which he describes as "James Brown meets Black Sabbath." Humorously, he suggests that, for anyone trying to distinguish between his and Masa's lead playing, the tell tale sign is: "Anything weird, that's me!" Dynamically, this track is also interesting, and something else to listen out for comes when the funky verse groove shifts into the much heavier Sabbath-esque chorus. Here, there is a 6bpm shift downwards in tempo, which helps the transition between light and dark moods. "You can't really hear it," Xavier says, "but you can feel it."

Elsewhere on the album, other genres and moods crash together with spectacular narrative-enhancing results. *Trudoo*, for example, pairs Nashville country blues with funk to create a celebratory ode to freedom, while the album opener *Venomous Dogma* transitions from dreamy pop to ominous blues rock riffage to convey the contrast

Similarly, on Masa's own versatility and ability to keep up with the album's many creative directions, Xavier remarks: "Whatever lane I go down, he's like, 'No problem!' I've never met another guitar player ever that could authentically follow me down any lane that I've wanted to go down." The pair have been in everything from punk to R&B bands together over the years, so there's a long history of putting each other through their paces and breaking new musical ground together.

As for experimenting with pedals and effects on the record, Masa reveals, "I didn't use many at all – just a wah and a volume pedal, and maybe just a little booster". He adds, "Live, I use a lot of pedals – I'm a pedal junkie! Negrito hates that. He's always telling me I don't need so many." Still, Masa puts this limited selection to good and tasteful use throughout. A particular highlight is the funky, wah-laden track, *Highest Bidder*, which sets lyrical themes of human greed and the flaunting of wealth to a delirious soundtrack of blues-meets-disco.

What's striking about the entire record is that very few normally-adhered-to rules seem to apply. Simultaneously it feels vintage and experimental, its moods are both celebratory and oppressive and there's simply nothing to be gained from trying to categorise it as any particular genre. Says Xavier, "I really wanted to smash the walls on this record. As artists, we're just trying to get to that truth, and it means everything, especially in today's world."

Reflecting on the ambitious and highly conceptual nature of the whole project, Xavier explains, "I just reached a time, age and place where I create with the liberty of a 17 year old, combined with the wisdom of a grandfather. I don't have the hangups. I'm not trying to be a superstar."

Throughout the course of the interview, Xavier makes it very clear that the word "limitations" is not in his vocabulary – musically or otherwise. He chooses to focus on what can be done, rather than what can't. His next project – an acoustic reworking of the entire record – is already near completion, and the inspiration just keeps coming. "It's the spectrum of life that I enjoy," he remarks, "and I just kind of walk towards that – like Grandma Elizabeth Gallimore. It can all be done, you know?"

Words Grant Moon

“I like the freedom to experiment”

Tips on songwriting, gear and tone, by Grant Nicholas of **Feeder**

When the new Feeder album *Torpedo* shot to number five on the UK chart in April, it was a sweet moment for a band that has been a fixture on the British rock scene since the late 90s. "We were totally blown away with the response to it," says guitarist/vocalist Grant Nicholas. It was also something of a surprise. "Honestly, it was going to be a fanbase-only record, a mini release that we weren't even going to take to radio," he says. "But then some people heard it and told us we should definitely put it out. And we've got loads more material written, so there's going to be another record hopefully next year – it's kind of like a double album in two halves."

Talking from the band's rehearsal room in London, he explains how he keeps things fresh after all these years – offering advice on writing, soloing, and how pedals give a new twist to what he calls his 'hovercraft' sound…

Get yourself a nice acoustic and write what you like to play.

I've always tended to write on acoustic guitar, and every track on *Torpedo* was written on acoustic. I've got a couple of old Guild M-20s, I got a Gibson J-200, a Hummingbird, but my main guitar for writing is a nice '67 J-45 Gibson. It's got a really thin neck and just the lowest action, like an electric, so you can play a few riffs on it. Obviously, then I go into my studio, get the Jazzmaster out, get the fuzzboxes going and take it from there. People think because we've had a couple of hit singles we can't be that heavy, but Feeder's always had a heavy side, and if you come to a show you'll see we're still a pretty rocking band. But it's still got to be a good song, because that's what we're about. We enjoyed rocking out on tour for [2019 album] *Tallulah*, and I remember feeling that the band just came alive when we played *Kyoto*, so it was on my mind to do something with a bit of that feel. And there was the frustration of not being to play during lockdown – that brought a rock edge to the writing for *Torpedo*.

Keep your favourite gear close, but try some new effects, too.

I call my sound my 'hovercraft' sound, where there's a lot of top and bottom to it, but I like to mess with new pedals too. I've been using a custom-made ELF fuzz by a Japanese company called RoShi Pedals, along with a Green Big Muff, vintage Tone Benders, my Pete Cornish overdrive, a Memory Man (I've been using them since day one) and a RayGun Meatropolis fuzz. When I'm recording I like to have loads of pedals all over the studio floor, so I've got that freedom to plug things in in different ways and experiment. The main riff for the song Torpedo would've been a combination of a Green Big Muff, Tone Bender, an Ibanez Tube Screamer set almost clean and some other stuff. As far as guitars, I used my custom ESP and Custom Shop Strat, but my original '59 'Old Brown' Jazzmaster is still my go-to electric. It's got quite low-output pickups which I like for recording. When I do the heavy songs I track all the rhythm parts in standard tuning through my Marshall JMP head, which has been on every Feeder track since [1996 EP] *Swim*. My Vox AC30 and a Fender Hot Rod Deville were recorded through Palmer speaker simulators – when you're working in a small space and can't crank it out, speaker sims can be really good.

It's all about the song, not the guitar solo.

I'm self-taught, I do everything by ear. When I was younger I did a lot more lead playing, but I'm not a traditional soloist. I mean, I love great guitar players like Eddie Van Halen, David Gilmour, Randy Rhoads, but it's not really my style. I'm more of a songwriter, riffy/chordy guy. I will occasionally do a traditional solo, like on the track *Decompress*, but in general my lead tends to be a little bit more off-the-wall, from the Sonic Youth school of rock! I do loads of lead stuff as musical parts, and I think they're quite tasteful. For me it's more about chord shapes – you can always find a new way of playing a chord – and tunings. The acoustic on *Hide And Seek* is in open E-shape tuning, and I often tune the guitars down half a step. This is actually the first record I've done where I haven't used a capo – I wanted to keep it really big and dense sounding, so there's a lot of drop tunings, like drop D. *Magpie* is one of my favourite tracks on the album, because it's really dense. It's like this great big dinosaur. I remember walking around the kitchen playing that on my acoustic, and my daughter saying, "Dad, that's actually quite cool!"

PEDAL TO THE METAL
Grant's Pete Cornish G-2 pedal (left) and his Coloursound Supa ToneBender

Aim to have your own sound, your own musical identity.

The song on *Torpedo* that sums me up as a player over the last twenty or thirty years of being in the band is *When It All Breaks Down*. It's classic Feeder – it's got the quiet, clean bits, the riffs, the anthemic chorus and the textures, which is what I'm all about. But then there's *The Healing*, too. The best songs I've ever written – and the best songs in rock 'n' roll – are usually three or four chords. When you can get that to work, it's just the best. I approached *The Healing* like that. I wanted it to be a classic rock song – with classic chord changes like, say, Boston's *More Than A Feeling*, but undeniably us too. I had this massive rock opera thing in my head, and that middle section in there is, to me, very Feeder. What makes us different from a mainstream rock band is we're not scared to go a bit more alternative. I like us to sound heavy and powerful, but effortlessly so rather than forced, and aggressive. We've got better at that as we've got older – we've still got the power, but we're not trying to be teenagers screaming our heads off with fake emotion…

***Torpedo* is out now. Feeder tour the UK in May.**

"YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND A NEW WAY OF PLAYING A CHORD"

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Photos** Wunmi Onibudo

"I DO AS MUCH WITH MY FEET AS I DO WITH MY HANDS!"

Bloc Party's lead guitarist Russell Lissack has two of the most complex pedalboards ever amassed. So how many pedals did he have when making the band's new album? "Probably a hundred," he laughs...

In 2019, Bloc Party returned to their roots with a tour where they performed their platinum-selling debut album *Silent Alarm* in full. Buzzing from that tour, they started writing their sixth album. "We wanted to capture the energy and the chemistry that the four of us were forming from playing live again," says lead guitarist Russell Lissack. They finished their initial writing period in March 2020, so you know what happened next...

Unlike other bands, however, recording remotely and sharing files online was not an option for Bloc Party. As Russell puts it: "Touring *Silent Alarm* was quite instrumental in the writing process. We wanted that same energy when we were in the room bouncing ideas off each other. I think I don't think it would have been the same if we tried to do that remotely."

When Russell breaks down the band's process, it's obvious it couldn't happen any other way. And as he explains, everything begins with an idea from the band's leader, guitarist/vocalist Kele Okereke. "Kele might come in with a chord sequence or a general idea," Russell says. "I'll be more sprinkling things on top of that to add character to it, rather than coming in with specific sections. Kele tends to prefer everyone reacting in the moment to something. He'll either have an idea or even a suggestion: 'Let's try something like this,' and seeing where it goes. When you come in with something that's quite formed already then it's harder to deviate from it, because you're quite used to something that already exists. When you do it all together it feels less cemented. There's more room to experiment, to change things."

So they waited, much to the band's displeasure. "Being forced to sit on something for extended periods can be really frustrating. You lose that initial excitement," Russell comments. It proved a good decision, though. "We overcame that and ended up changing some things, adding new excitement and energy."

The band's new album *Alpha Games* has a freshness that comes from new blood, being the first album they've recorded with drummer Louise Bartle, who joined in 2015. It sounds distinctive for being an album based on live interplay between musicians in an era where almost everyone is working asynchronously. As Russell says of the enforced delay: "It gave us more time to sit with the songs that we'd written, change things and write more songs. Ultimately we finished with a stronger selection of songs."

They made an exception to their insistence on teamwork for Russell's standout guitar moment on the album, the solo to *The Girls Were Fighting*. "I recorded the solo from that at home," he says. "We'd written the whole song together and there was a gap where the solo was going to be. We weren't going to see each other for a month." Russell had four weeks to kill and a newly acquired pedal, the Jack White-approved Mantic Flex Pro. "It's a fuzz pedal but it goes completely wild. It kind of goes all 8-bit, glitches and stuff. As soon as you hear it you can recognise it. That's the newest addition to my 'board, but it's one of my favourites."

As always for Bloc Party's lead player, pedals are where the action is. "The effects pedals are the defining part of our sound more than guitars and amps," Russell says. "I would always cite what I'm doing with pedals as being the most important thing. I tend to be doing as much with my feet as I'm doing with my hands. It's certainly the challenging part of what we do on record and replicating it live. There's so much footwork involved and real-time manipulation of sounds using pedals. They've always been the one of the most exciting aspects for me."

We tried asking Russell what pedals were used on *Alpha Games*, but he revealed that he and producer Adam Greenspan had brought in "probably 100 different pedals" to the recording sessions. "There's not a specific chain," Russell explains. "During the course of the recording I was dismantling the pedalboard and putting things in various orders." But central to the Bloc Party tone are the Boss delays (two DD-3s, two DD-6s and a DD-5) and OS-2 Overdrive/Distortion, which have been on Russell's 'board since day one, and the Slicer dual tremolo pedal.

Alpha Games sees Russell go further than ever in his quest to push the guitar into synth territory. "The Electro-Harmonix Synth9 pedal is quite a big part of this record," he says. "I've always been into pedals since I've started playing guitar. I've always had like this desire to make the guitar sound as much like a keyboard as possible because there's such a range of sounds achievable from a synthesizer. This pedal is great. It's definitely the closest I've got to that. It's got a real range of synth effects. It's not a million miles from the Electro-Harmonix POG, but it's the next level up from that. When you combine that with other things as well it's fairly unlimited."

"IT'S GREAT TO FOCUS ON WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE AS GUITAR PLAYERS AGAIN"

Further weirdness came from Hologram pedals. "They make loops and real-time manipulation of things you play," Russell says. "They create glitches and different time patterns, different time signatures. We were using those quite a bit during the writing and the recording. They would add a random element to what you're doing, and by changing what you're playing it caused you to respond to something unexpected in real time. It was quite exciting having that artificial influence on what you're doing."

Despite this passion for synth sounds, Russell is reluctant to go to the whole hog and try a MIDI guitar synth like Roland's GK-55. "I'm stuck between worlds," he admits. "When you get too far in that direction it's like you're not actually playing a guitar from someone else's perspective. No one would know it was a guitar on the record, so you might as well be playing a synth anyway. I like to think even though the sounds are quite unusual and have that synth element, they do still sound like they've been played on a guitar. There's a nice middle ground which I enjoy. I guess it's more exciting for me and rewarding to feel like pushing what the guitar is doing while still being a guitar."

The guitar in question is still a 2004 American Ash Telecaster, bought with the money from Bloc Party's first advance. Besides a pile of stickers and a Seymour Duncan bridge pickup, it's unmodified. On the band's current tour, it's supported by a more recent Player Plus Telecaster in aged candy apple red.

BOARD MASTER
"The effects pedals are the defining part of our sound," Russell says.

Lissack's Billy Corgan signature Strat also made it to the *Alpha Games* sessions, but the Telecaster ruled the day. Amps were Fender's ever-reliable Hot Rod Deluxes, mainly used on the dirty channel. "We've been using them since 2004. They still feel like part of the Bloc Party sound. I have tried other things I've never found anything that feels as right as they do."

On the day we spoke to Russell, he'd just taken delivery of a Boss GT-1000, which he's considering as an alternative to real amps for touring. "Our crew would appreciate not having lots of amps," he says, "so they're quite keen for us to try alternatives. The Hot Rods do always sound different. I've got two on stage for different channels, and even between the two of them they sound quite different, especially when the when the valves age. When you're doing international touring and having to hire amps, having the same sound every night could be good."

Effects wizardry aside, *Alpha Games* still took plenty of old-fashioned musical craft to write. Opening track *Day Drinker* came from Kele's idea to write a canon ("like *London Bridge Is Falling Down*!" Russell laughs) where the same melody is triggered at different times, creating harmonies with itself. "That was the starting point for the second half of that song," he says. "It was mostly written in the room together getting little bits of melody and seeing what works in harmony together. I remember playing it round and round, just the three of us finessing it and extending the sequence from quite a simple starting point, getting it longer and more developed, and then editing it down. We had a phone just recording it in the room so we could listen back to it each day and see which bits were working. There was an element of improvisation to what we were doing."

With such multi-tracked, detailed recordings, it must be a nightmare to replicate live. Russell, though, is more than up for it. "We try and replicate as much as we can from the records. We both have multiple channels going from our pedalboards into separate amps. We try and incorporate loops and things we can have as much of what is going on [on the records] being replayed live as possible. It's great to focus more on what we can achieve as guitar players again."

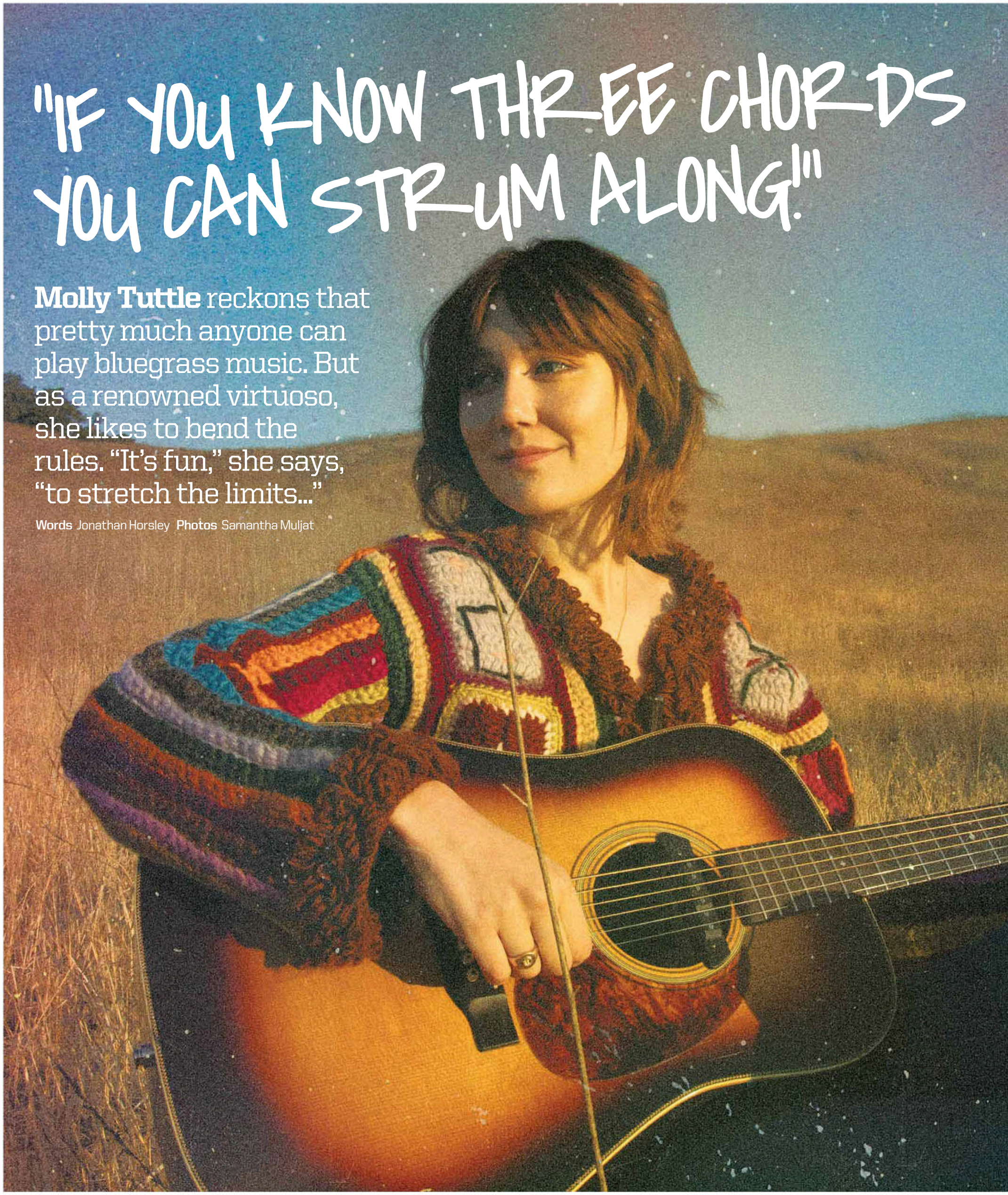
CUSTOM SHOP
"The big black pedal is custom made, it's two Boss DD-3s with a built in channel switch and cut off. The DD-3 with the knobs removed acts as a remote switch to activate it for rapid changes."

HOT WIRED
"The silver boxes are all junction switches for the pedals underneath. There's multiple switch boxes on the 'board that were custom made for me, switching pedals between different channels, so there isn't a direct routing. It's something that is changing between songs."

"IF YOU KNOW THREE CHORDS YOU CAN STRUM ALONG!"

Molly Tuttle reckons that pretty much anyone can play bluegrass music. But as a renowned virtuoso, she likes to bend the rules. "It's fun," she says, "to stretch the limits..."

Words Jonathan Horsley **Photos** Samantha Muljat



Bluegrass belongs to a long tradition but having the weight of history on its shoulders does not preclude it from existing as a radical art form. This musical style – light on its feet, effervescent, joyous, on occasion elegiac and melancholy – has been woven together from myriad influences, a uniquely American story of many cultures and different voices all bringing something to the party in a sound that welcomes it all.

That, too, is true of the players and their abilities. There's a virtuosic element to the bluegrass rank-and-file, among whom we'll find latter-day phenoms in the likes of Billy Strings and Molly Tuttle – players whose technical ecstasy brings lightning into a largely acoustic space. But if you know three chords and count to four, the chances are you can play along, too. And Tuttle says you would be made to feel right at home.

Her new album, *Crooked Tree*, is a thoroughly modern bluegrass record, which is to say it mines the history of the art form for its sonic vocabulary and then contextualises it in the 21st century. It is explicitly bluegrass by design but only after the song ideas started piling up and Molly reached the point where it just felt right to do an all-bluegrass record now.

Speaking via Zoom before a show at Brownfield, Maine's Stone Mountain Arts Center, she explains how the genre's stylistic horizons yield plenty of free space for its contemporary practitioners to run into.

"I like bluegrass for the reasons that you mentioned," she says. "It is such a combination of different cultures, and different influences. I think it is kind of radical in that it is a music that anyone can have access to. These are songs of the people, told by people who are just telling their own life stories a lot of the time. People try to put rules around it, and I don't think that's necessary. Once you learn the basic technique of playing bluegrass banjo or bluegrass guitar, it is going to sound bluegrass, and it's fun to stretch the limits of that."

Tuttle's approach involves applying her preternaturally gifted flatpicking technique to bluegrass patterns, orthodox or otherwise, and then telling a story. *Crooked Tree* stands proud on the wide open instrumental plains of bluegrass instrumentalism by virtue of its storytelling verve. There's the autobiographical Grass Valley that speaks of attending bluegrass festivals with her father, Jack, and she brings him onboard for a vocal. She also espouses big tent themes of American unity in *Big Backyard* that play out like Tuttle's take on *This Land Is Your Land*. "It's just trying to give people a sense of this country is very divided but it belongs to all of us," she explains. "It belongs to everyone. I don't believe in trying to keep people out of America or building big walls over half the country."

Then there is *Dooley's Farm*, which brings the aforementioned Billy Strings onboard for a 21st-century reworking of the The Dillards' famous standard; in which Tuttle's Dooley is less known for his 40-gallon still and more for the potent marijuana he grows on his land.

"I feel like a lot of people who play bluegrass are instrumentalists – most people who play bluegrass don't write songs, a lot of them don't even sing, and a lot of them don't even listen to the words!" she laughs. "I have always gravitated to musicians who really loved songwriting, even if they didn't write songs themselves, and I think you can always tell when someone is listening to what the song is about. You can hear it in their playing."

This is one of the main reasons why Molly chose the legendary Jerry Douglas to co-produce *Crooked Tree*. She knew Douglas would be mindful of the broader mission, the golden rule for any songwriter that says everything has to work around the vocals and the lyrics because what you are singing about matters.

"I know he backs up songs so beautifully, and cares what they are about, and doesn't just play notes and notes over them if it is not calling for them," she says. "There is a balance to the music. When I think about it, at the time we were recording this album, we were just trying to strike a balance between being true to the tradition, and still keeping those tempos up and featuring virtuosic playing, but also making it a songwriter record as well."

Tuttle's songwriting sensibility was shaped by the likes of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Gillian Welch, and of course bluegrass trailblazers such as Hazel Dickens and The Stanley Brothers. But there are all kinds of influences that are brought to bear on her sound. Rage Against The Machine, Jimi Hendrix and Blink-182 might not be foregrounded in the bronzed acoustic textures of *Crooked Tree*, but rock was an early obsession, and early obsessions have a way of getting under the skin. Tuttle even recorded punk band Rancid's Olympia, WA for her 2020 covers album *I'd Rather Be With You*. But then that's a record that finds Tuttle reinterpreting the Rolling Stones, The National, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Harry Styles.

"I have always listened to all styles of music, and I think that is just a product of growing up around the time of iTunes and then later Spotify," she says. "When I started being able to get old enough to explore other styles of music, I remember in sixth or seventh grade having a teacher who had a big CD collection and was like, 'You can take whatever CDs you want and burn them onto your computer.' That tells you that it was the early 2000s! I was listening to everything on my iPod Shuffle."

Tuttle grew up in San Francisco's Bay Area, moving to Boston when she was 19 to study at Berklee, before settling in Nashville in 2015. She says moving has given her an outsider's perspective, the aesthetic distance to see things from a different angle. Some of *Crooked Tree* sounds like it draws upon the American literary canon as much as its songbook. No more so than on *Flatland Girl*, which is like something that could have been adapted from John Steinbeck's notebook.

"I do really admire the art of storytelling, and I have always loved to read," she says. "When I am reading, the song ideas flow faster. Thank you for that compliment. I love John Steinbeck. I read a lot of his books in high school, and especially growing up in the Bay Area, reading his books and going to Cannery Row; I feel like he really influenced that area. When I wrote *Flatland Girl* it was very slow and mournful, and we made it peppy, and did the classic bluegrass thing where it sounds really happy and you are saying something that is really sad."

That's the other great tension and contradiction within bluegrass's aesthetic. It's a style most often performed in a communal jam – replete with stunt banjo, see-sawing fiddle and knuckle-twisting acoustic guitar gymnastics – all of which are tossed headlong into a helter-skelter rhythm. The mood in the room might be one of collective euphoria from people coming together, and yet the song itself might have been inspired by great tragedy. Such phenomena are not sleight of hand; they are forced into being by sheer weight of numbers. When Tuttle and Douglas were gaming out the songs on *Crooked Tree* it was soon decided that it was to be recorded as live as possible, with as many bodies in the room. Molly jokes about the 'fiddle cloud'. If there was a fiddle player passing by Music City's Oceanway Studios, they'd be hauled in to complement Jason Carter's kinetic elbow. These strings – mandolin, banjo, fiddle, guitar and upright – suspend Tuttle's compositions in richly textured, organic sound. It's a three-dimensional and immersive record, just as a bluegrass show is. These songs might also evolve in the moment, Molly says, liable to be augmented by improv when presented before an audience. What you hear recorded on *Crooked Tree* is just "a screenshot".

KIND OF BLUE
"The classic bluegrass thing is where it sounds really happy and you are saying something that is really sad," Molly says.

"I have played the songs a bunch live and things have changed," she says. "For this music, because it is such an organic style, and so much of the album was inspired by jam sessions and bluegrass festivals, we really wanted to record it as live as possible. You can hopefully hear that on the record."

When she made *But I'd Rather Be With You*, there was no one around. It was

a pandemic record of unlimited vocal takes and a click-track for company, and ultimately a learning process that she enjoyed. She used the time to adapt her flatpicking to the material, to "kinda reframe bluegrass" and experiment. *Crooked Tree* was a change of pace, originally scheduled to come together in just four days. "I was like, 'Woah! That's crazy,'" she laughs. "We ended up doing a little bit more than that, doing some overdubs, but mostly the vocals are live and everything was done right there in the studio."

Tracking was done on a pair of custom acoustics from Pre-War Guitars, a North Carolina company specialising in boutique builds inspired by vintage Martin and Gibson. Molly's are based on old Martin D-18 and D-28 dreadnoughts, preferring a skinnier neck than some of the clubbier profiles found on 1930s models.

"They don't sound like a brand-new guitar that just came out of the guitar factory and sounds really shiny, and kind of closed," she says. "So that instantly made me gravitate towards them. And they are just great to take on the road. They are really stable. I have toured with an old guitar and it was just having so many issues. I was doing harm to the guitar! I put it in the shop so many times it was like it was losing the original things that made it cool.

"That is what is important to me, a guitar that I can take on the road and take anywhere. I took the Pre-Wars to the beach and then the next week I took them to a ski resort and played a set outside in 15 degrees and they were fine."

She also prefers a narrow-ish 1 11/16" (43mm) nut width, which is easier to navigate for a flatpicker to navigate. Molly's style also leans on the clawhammer techniques Michael Stadler taught her. Clawhammer guitar migrated to guitar from Appalachian banjo players, and involves parking the guitar in an a banjo-esque open tuning like Gsus4. But listening to her talk bluegrass is an invitation to introduce any style you can imagine to the sound. Once you have the rudiments of bluegrass orthodoxy down, everything else is fair game. Players like Tuttle have proved that. Billy Strings, too. Art, and not least music, never moves forward when we handle it with silk gloves and respect. It is a living thing.

"If you know three chords you can strum along," Molly says. "These are songs of the people, told by people who are just telling their own life stories a lot of the time, so that's why I like it. It's like folk music but with really specific stylistic elements that I wanted to include on my album. And then you see people like Billy Strings who are playing with bluegrass instrumentation. You hear his guitar playing and that sounds like Doc Watson – but then he is also playing rock licks and playing tons of pedals and has this crazy light show and is sampling stuff on his albums. That's another thing that makes it cool. You can take this music and add whatever you want. You can take it and make it your own. That's what Bill Munroe did with it when he was first putting his band together. It is just part of the tradition."

FREE SPIRIT
"You can take this music and add whatever you want."

"BLUEGRASS MUSIC IS AN ORGANIC STYLE, AND SO MUCH OF THE ALBUM WAS INSPIRED BY JAM SESSIONS"

BLUEGRASS ESSENTIALS

Run for your lives, the banjos are coming! Here is TG's guide to getting started with bluegrass

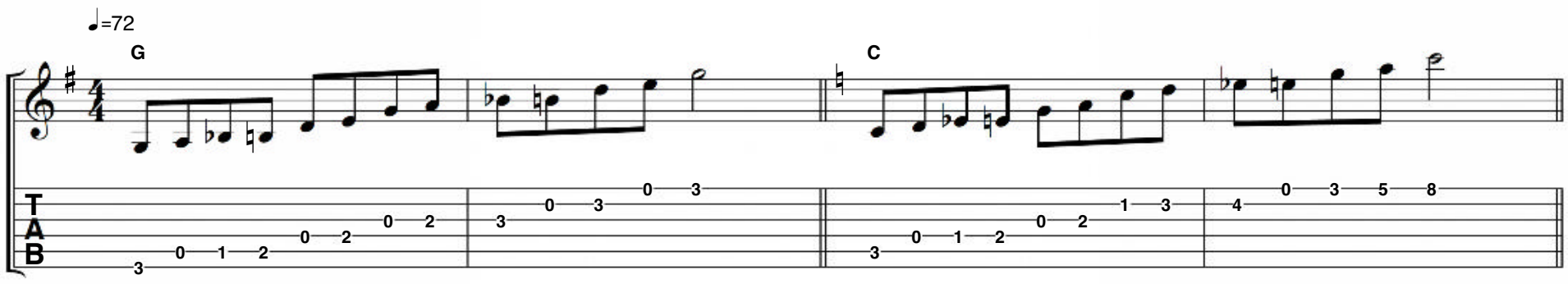
One of America's oldest forms of music, bluegrass was once derided as Hillbilly car-chase music dominated by rattling banjos and insane acoustic guitar picking. However, with the huge popularity of a new generation of artists like Molly Tuttle and Billy Strings, the style has been freshened up and guitarists are discovering how much fun bluegrass can be. With that in mind, it's time to get you started with some essential bluegrass basics.

Whilst it can sound like country music to the uninitiated, bluegrass is very much its own style, with unique instrumentation usually made up of vocals, guitar, banjo, upright bass and mandolin, plus resonator guitars often appearing, too. Drumkit accompaniment isn't so common – bluegrass players lock in with great timing and thinking percussively is a key element of the genre.

The following examples will introduce some of the basic concepts from scale choices to rhythm and blazing licks.

ESSENTIAL BLUEGRASS SCALE

BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



Bluegrass players really get the style in place by learning classic repertoire, but knowing some suitable scales is a frustration-free way to get the sound too. Here is the major blues scale starting from G and then C. This scale forms the basis of many classic licks.

MAJOR BLUES SCALE LICK

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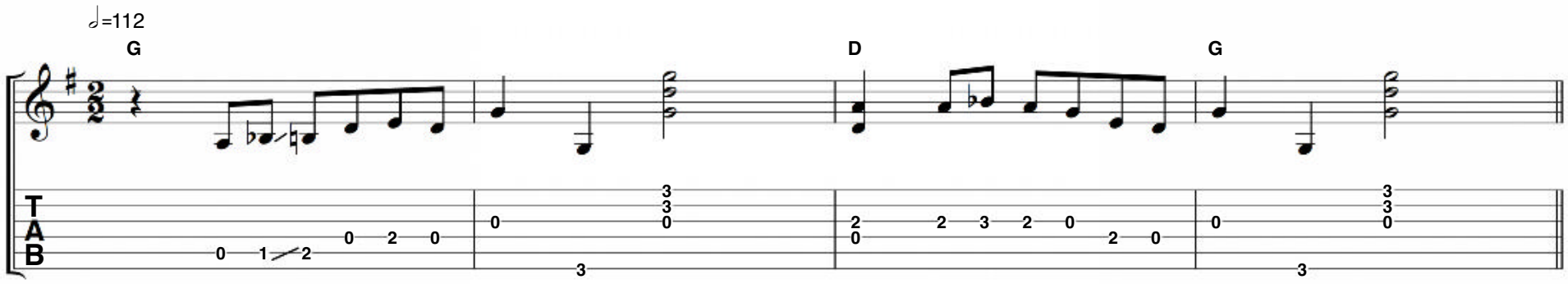

Here's a classic bluegrass lick showing the G major blues scale in action. In bar 1, notice the slide from the minor 3rd (B flat) to the major 3rd (B) over a G root chord – this movement is integral to bluegrass. Also, note how the G chord is broken up with a bass note/chord approach in bars 2 and 4.

Guitars & backing Stuart Ryan

BASS AND CHORD GROOVE

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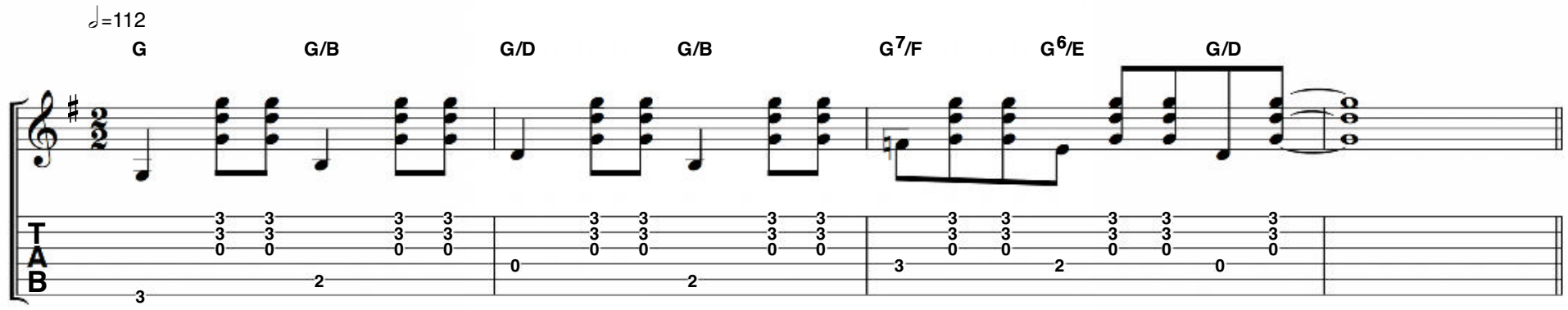
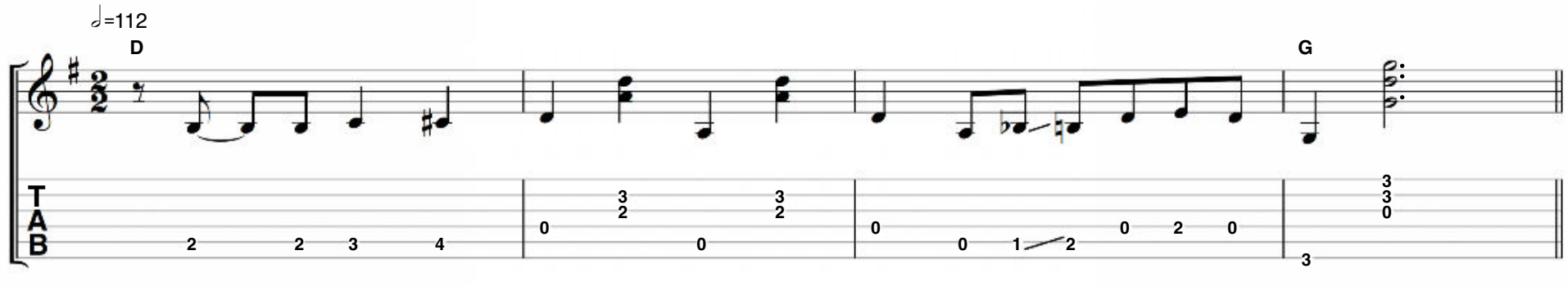


All the greatest bluegrass players are masters of rhythm – providing a backing for other instruments is a big part of the style. A typical approach breaks a chord up with a bass note/chord strum pattern. Infinite variations of this exist, but playing across the strings is the main focus.

TURNAROUND LICK

BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



Here's a common turnaround sequence from the V chord (D) to the I chord (G). This example has also been used as an intro countless times and, as with other styles, you need to learn some well-used licks, patterns and sequences so you can start to sound authentic.

GUITAR SOLO LICK

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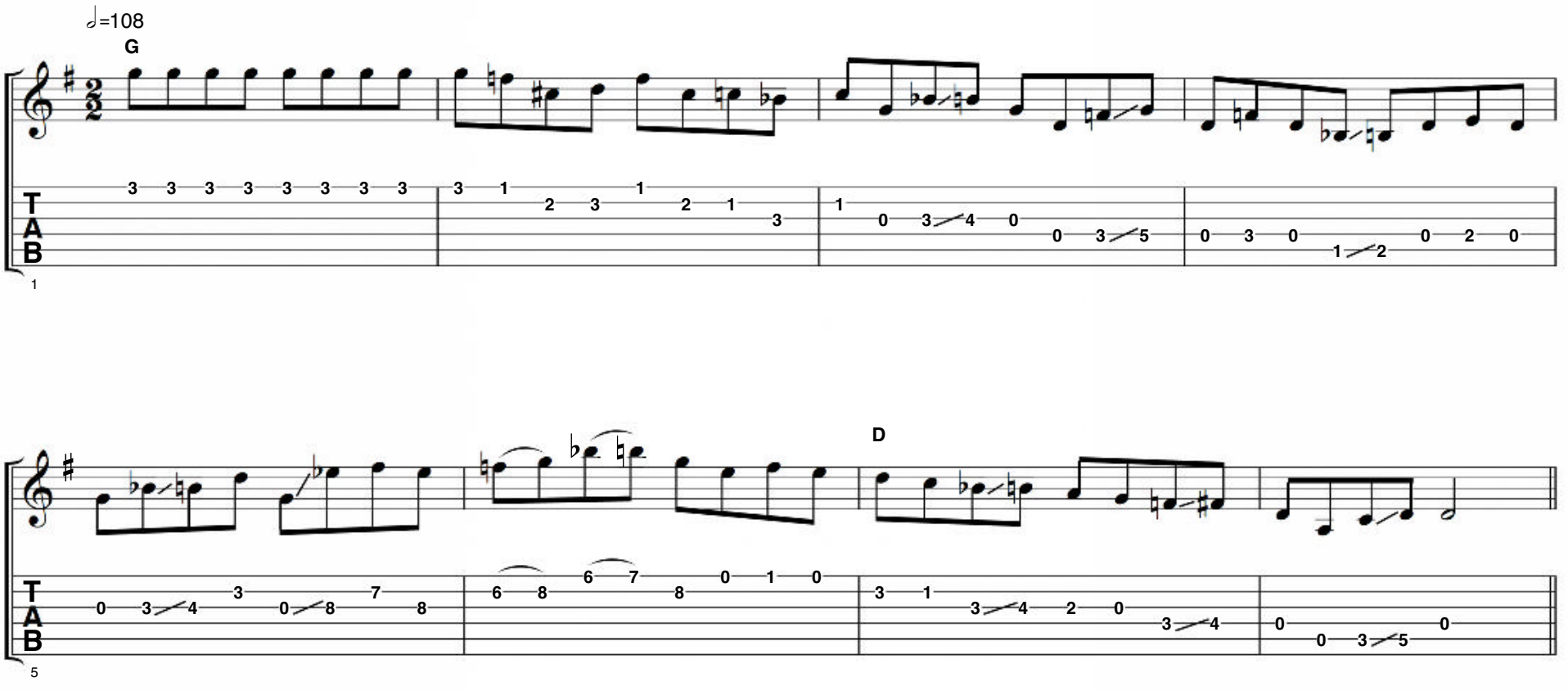

This lick is inspired by bluegrass prodigy Billy Strings. There's no getting away from it, rapid-fire alternate picking in the open position is at the core of his style. Both fret hand and pick hand need to be in perfect time with each other, so make sure to practise our lick slowly, breaking it down phrase by phrase.

Words Jenna Scaramanga Photos Kevin Nixon

HOW TO CREATE A ROCK ANTHEM BY DEF LEPPARD

Guitarists **Phil Collen** and **Vivian Campbell** on the art of the stadium rock banger. Rule number one: "Respect the melody..."

Only four British bands have had two ten-million selling albums in America. The first three – The Beatles, Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd. And the fourth? No, not The Rolling Stones. Not The Who. Not Queen. It's Def Leppard.

Formed in Sheffield in 1977, the band rose to fame in the 80s with the two blockbuster albums that sealed their place in that exclusive club – 1983's *Pyromania* and 1987's *Hysteria*. And the key to this success is their mastery of the rock anthem – as illustrated in hit songs such as *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, *Animal*, *Photograph*, *Rocket*, *Rock Of Ages* and *Let's Get Rocked*.

This summer they head out at last for the twice-postponed Stadium Tour in the US with Mötley Crüe, Poison and Joan Jett. But while Leppard could easily tour for the rest of their lives off their back catalogue, the urge to make new music is still

strong within them. "A lot of artists stop growing and creating," says guitarist Phil Collen. "We haven't."

The making of new album *Diamond Star Halos* was a first for the band – as they worked remotely from their homes, recording song ideas and individual parts on laptops, sharing material via Dropbox, which was then collated into finished tracks by the band's long-serving producer Ronan McHugh. But the band's signature sound remains very much intact on an album packed with new anthems in the classic Leppard tradition.

The first single, *Kick*, nods to their glam rock heroes from the early 70s. Even the album's title is taken from the lyrics to the T.Rex glam classic *Get It On*. And throughout the album, Phil Collen's partnership with Irish guitarist Vivian Campbell, is as strong as it's ever been – something that's evident from the get-go with the blazing trade-off solos in the opening track *Take What You Want*.

These guys have been playing together for 30 years now. Phil joined the band in 1982 during the making of *Pyromania*. Vivian joined ten years later following the death of the band's original member Steve Clark.

Creating stadium rock bangers is Def Leppard's speciality, and here, Phil and Viv present their guide to how it's done...

THE SONG IS KING

Vivian: The real reason why Def Leppard is so different to so many other bands is we know – it's not about us, it's about the songs. It's not about how well I can play guitar or how well Phil can play guitar. It's about the f*cking song. You do your guitar parts as best as you can but at the end of the day the song is going to outlive all of us.

Phil: You've got to listen to what the vocal's doing. You have to respect that main melody, and then you can alter stuff around it. It has to be within the vocal structure, because you can f*ck something up.

KNOW WHEN TO LET RIP

Phil: The reason we've played safe in the past is because you're respecting the song maybe too much. With this one, because we recorded remotely and there was no one else in the room it's like, 'F*ck it.' You can overthink and play too safe. You're like, 'I don't want to tread on anything.' With this one, I was like 'Well, I'm going to experiment. I feel this should be like this,' and go off. I'd send it to everyone then if no one says, 'That's a bit over the top!' then you're fine.

Vivian: I do feel that my playing is better than ever and certainly more comfortable. I have a lot less anxiety about it, probably because I'm doing it so much since I started Last In Line (the group he formed in 2012 with fellow ex-members of Dio – the band in which he made his name in the early 80s). The passion was reignited and I've definitely built upon it. When it came time to do guitar solos I didn't have the pressure of other people in the room. You know, 'Lunch is coming up. When is he going to do this?'

LEAVE A GAP FOR THE SNARE

TG says: In the past, Leppard learned so much from Mutt Lange, the producer of *Pyromania* and *Hysteria*. They even called him the 'sixth member' of the band. Many of Lange's hits have riffs that pause for the snare drum – check out AC/DC's *Highway To Hell* and *Back In Black* or The Cars' *You Might Think*. The same is true for Leppard's new single.

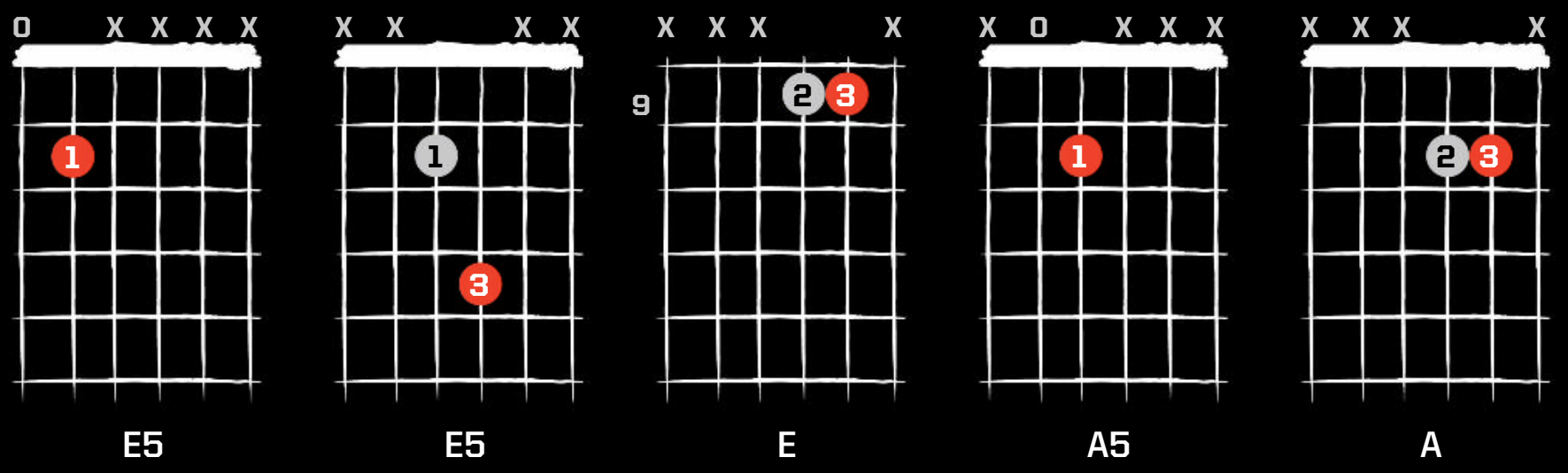
Phil: With *Kick*, I think I had the chorus and then it broke down to the verse. I wanted something with gaps, like *Pour Some Sugar On Me*. When we did that my original riff was a bit like *White Lines* by Grandmaster Flash, a continuous thing. Mutt was like, 'Oh no, man, you got to leave a gap for the snare!' That just brought it to life. I wanted to do that for the verse of *Kick*.

PLAYING MATTERS MORE THAN GEAR

Vivian: I moved from Los Angeles to New Hampshire, so I don't have many guitars at home. Most of my guitars are in Def Leppard's locker in southern California. It's probably just as well because there's enough choice in the drop down menu in Guitar Rig without auditioning every Les Paul again. I don't want to get into the weeds too much. It's about the performance more than the guitar, the preset or anything. To be honest, a lot of my choice came down to which guitar has the freshest strings!

"I WANT LESS GEAR, NOT MORE. HOW YOU PLAY

LAYER YOUR CHORDS...



Vivian: In a really good Def Leppard song Phil and I are never playing the same parts. In the hard rock world there's this school of thought that you have two guitar parts playing the same thing to make it sound heavier. If I get a demo from Phil, I would never play the chords in the same register he's put them down already. I just try inversions. There's countless ways you can play a chord up the guitar neck. But the bridge section in *Hysteria* where the notes were recorded one at a time for the chord – we've never done anything like that since. I think that's too much work!

Phil: If you want to make it broader, if someone's playing a powerchord or a barre chord, and the other one's doing an open version, that sounds great. If you're playing a D you could add an A chord, you know the first and the fifth. You put the parts in different octaves and also you do a different rhythm.

TG says: In *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, the chorus has the chords E, A, and B split across multiple guitar tracks. It is possible to play all those notes on one guitar, but with distortion they can sound muddy and out of tune.

Harmonised chords sound clearer, just as a Thin Lizzy-style twin guitar solo sounds clearer than playing doublestops on one distorted guitar. You can get more ambitious by layering these E- and A-shapes over each other.

Animal begins with an F5 powerchord layered over a B♭5 to create a big B♭sus2. The riff in *Photograph* includes a partial D5 chord layered with an A5, which makes Asus4. To hear parts in different octaves and with counter rhythms as Phil describes, listen to the chorus of *Hysteria* with headphones on.

GUITAR BEGINS AND ENDS WITH YOUR HANDS" VIVIAN CAMPBELL

Phil: On this album, I used a Squier Tele Thinline on the solo of *This Guitar*. It was just a standard thing I bought years ago in Dublin and it's just great. It's a Squier Starcaster at the beginning. And for the solo on *Gimme A Kiss*, I actually used a Squier Super-Sonic with a wah.

Vivian: Do I have any more signature gear planned? God no. I want less gear, not more. How you play guitar begins and ends with your hands. The rest is just sh*t to get in the way and sh*t that's gonna go wrong.

Phil: Everything is recorded with Guitar Rig. I've been using the same main preset since 2011. I made some presets for Guitar Rig 6 but I didn't want to update my computer because I was scared it wouldn't work anymore. Sometimes I'd send Ronan [McHugh, producer] the unamped sound so he can reamp it, but with a lot of this stuff the main the demo sound is what's on the record. Live we use Fractals, and whenever I do solo gigs I use a Blackstar Silverline. There's subtle differences obviously, but it all sounds like me – it sounds exactly the same!

Vivian: Because your tone is in your hands it doesn't really matter. Phil can pick up my Les Paul, and it sounds like Phil through my gear. I've played solos before with his Jackson, like the solo in the song *Paper Sun* [from 1999's *Euphoria*]. You can hear because I forgot to turn the sustainer off and you can hear there's one point where it goes into feedback. So tone is 100 per cent in your hands.

ANIMAL INSTINCT
"You can overthink and play too safe," Phil says.

PERFECTION SUCKS!

Phil: The intro to *Kick* was from my demo. You can hear this ringing that sounds like someone hit a jar or something. It's the guitar just overloading and peaking. We left it on because it sounds cool. The solo was a total guide, mistakes all over the place. I'm like, 'F*ck it, sounds great!' I love it just the way it is, so we left it on. Normally we do thirty tracks of a vocal harmony. On this one, some of the stuff is just me doing eight tracks. I would do a guide vocal in my echoey front room. Grab a [Shure] SM58 and just sing, like, 'I'll do it properly later on but this is how it goes.' Ronan would go 'That's great! Just use that,' and someone else would harmonise. You can actually hear everyone's voice. Joe [Elliott, vocalist] was f*cking spectacular. He was doing stuff in Dublin on his laptop with a little sh*tty mic that he does his radio show on, and that's some of the stuff that ended up on the album. That's Mutt Lange's thing. You'd say, 'It has to be perfect.' He's like 'F*ck no, I hate perfect!' He said it just has to sound and feel right.

WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE BETTER THAN YOU

Phil: It really helps me as a songwriter to write with someone who's better than me, or different to me. The speed that they do things is a little intimidating sometimes but it's just great to be around. I was writing with Sam Hollander, who wrote *High Hopes* for Panic! At The Disco. He's just awesome. It was really inspiring working with him because he's so quick firing. You know he's just writing away and just bouncing whole ideas. We had the whole thing done in an afternoon. You want to be around someone who's gonna do that. When I did the G3 tour with Satriani and Petrucci. We were doing *Highway Star* and from the first rehearsal I was like 'F*ck, I'm gonna have to practice a lot more because I'm just gonna get left behind by these guys.' They're just it's so far over the top. John goes, 'Well, if I do this harmony, Phil, you can do this.' It was further than I'd ever stretched on anything I'd ever done. I love someone giving you a helping hand and pushing you at the same time.

"ONE OF MY SOLOS WAS A TOTAL GUIDE, MISTAKES ALL

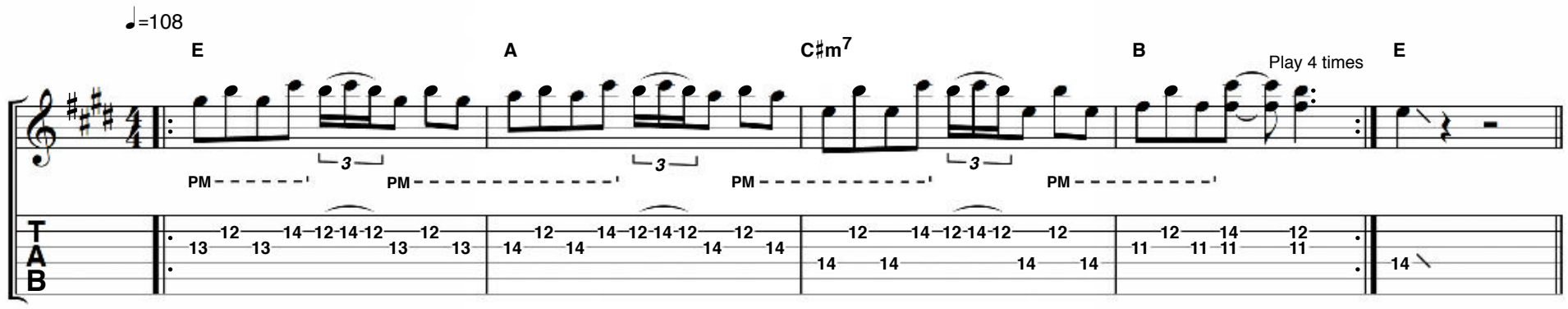
CREATE HOOKS EVERYWHERE

Phil: I always go back to Killer Queen (a number 2 UK hit for Queen in 1974). There's a hook almost like every two bars or something!

Vivian: In Def Leppard world we wouldn't be very excited about just power chords. Normally we'd be looking for a jangle to go on top. The jangle is what starts to elevate it to something other than the ordinary. That's not just a chord thing. We're looking for a part to go on top of that.

Phil: You can even do lead parts around the vocal, but you have to have that bedrock there. On the title track from *Hysteria* we had the vocal melody beforehand and Steve (Clark) would come up with something different. Again, it's got to respect the melody. As Keith Richards so eloquently put it, weaving sonic tapestries.

DEF LEPPARD STYLE 'HOOKY' LEAD **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**



TG SAYS: 'The jangle' can be distorted arpeggios (*Let's Get Rocked*), clean arpeggios (*Photograph*), or jamming on a ringing open string (*Pour Some Sugar On Me*). Check out *Love Bites*, *Hysteria* and *Animal* for lead guitar hooks that fit around the vocal. Our tab example shows how Leppard write lead parts around chord progressions. One note changes on each repeat to fit the chord changes, but that note isn't necessarily a root note. Over the E chord, the lick starts on G♯ (the major 3rd) and moves smoothly up one fret to A when the chord changes to A major.

OVER THE PLACE - BUT IT SOUNDS GREAT!" PHIL COLLEN

Guitars and backing Charlie Griffiths

DELAY TACTICS

Transform your tone with the atmosphere, rhythm and space that only a delay pedal can give

Defined as the distinct repetition of sound, dedicated delay effects were first seen in recording studios in the 1950s in the shape of cumbersome tape-echo units that used reels of magnetic tape (just like an old audio cassette) to record and play back sound. Solid-state technology brought delay to a more practical stompbox format in the 1970s. And, although many of the most common delays these days are digital, many replicate the natural warmth and grain of much-loved early tape echoes and analogue pedals.

Here, we're looking at five ways to use the effect, from epic atmospherics and post-rock ambience to synth-like swells and timed rhythmic parts. On the subject of timed delays, you'll need solid rhythm skills, of course, but also an understanding of how delay time (usually expressed in milliseconds) relates to musical tempo (expressed as beats per minute). Read on, as we cover what you need to know.

DELAY ESSENTIALS

Don't delay! Cover some basics with our brief jargon buster

PEDAL TERMINOLOGY

Feedback: Feedback refers to the number of times your signal repeats. Depending on your pedal, it can vary from one repeat to infinite echoes.

Time (aka rate): Every pedal allows you to control how fast the echoes come. Some pedals display measurements in milliseconds. Others require you to use your ear.

Tap tempo: This manually syncs the time of your delay to the song you're playing. In most cases you'll simply stomp on a footswitch in time with the music.

Mix (aka effect level): This knob controls how loud your guitar's repeats are compared to the input signal.

Analogue delay: Analogue delay pedals use a so-called Bucket Brigade chip – a capacitor array that gives them a distinctively dark sound that's increasingly lo-fi as you apply longer delay settings.

Digital delay: Digital delays are generally more pristine in timbre than the analogue kind. Depending on who you ask, you might hear them described as brighter, or even clinical. Some pedals, like the Boss DD-3, deliver a distinctive tone of their own that sits somewhere between clinical and the darker, grungier tone of an analogue delay. Fully featured digital units emulating classic delays are commonplace.

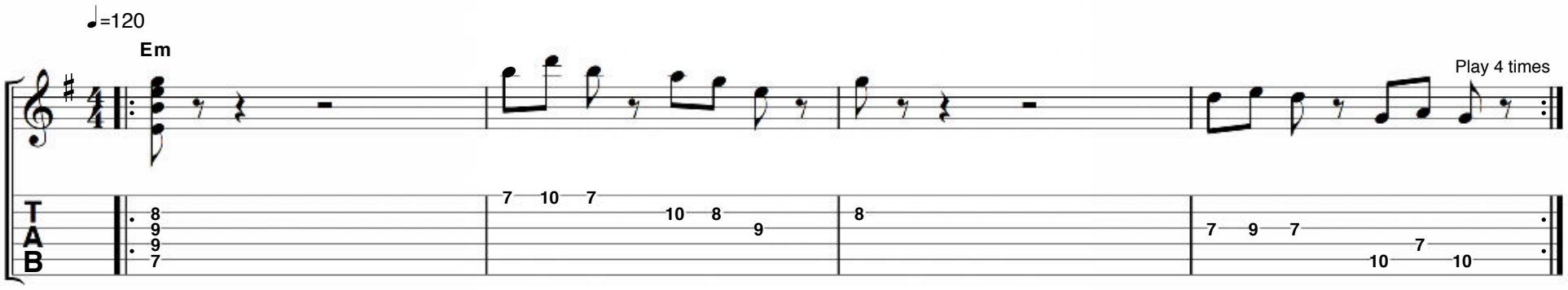
Timed delay: A quick look at delay time (in ms) at different musical tempos (bpm) will give you an idea of how they relate to a song's speed and rhythm:

120bpm:	500ms (quarter note)	250ms (eighth note)	125ms (16th note)
90bpm:	667ms (quarter note)	333ms (eighth note)	222ms (16th note)
60bpm:	1000ms (quarter note)	500ms (eighth note)	250ms (16th note)

Dotted eighth-note delay: You need to understand a nugget of music theory to employ the classic dotted eighth-note delay. A standard quarter-note rhythm is counted '1 2 3 4'. Eighth notes are twice the speed, and you'd count '1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &' to keep time. A dotted eighth is equal to 1.5 eighth notes. So, if you set a delay to a dotted eighth the repeats fall halfway between the eighth notes you play, giving a cascading run of evenly timed 16th notes.

01 TIMED REPEATS

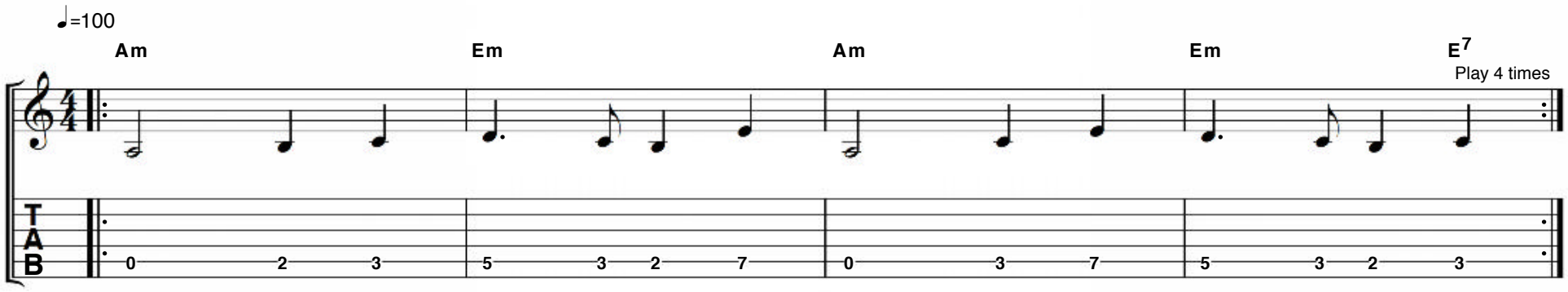
BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



Our first example is inspired by *The Adults Are Talking* by The Strokes, and, like the New York quintet, we're using delay to add timed, rhythmic repeats in the gaps. That means we need to match the delay time to the tempo of the track. Our track is at 160bpm, so a delay time of 375ms ensures the repeats land on the downbeat.

02 AMBIENT WET SOUND

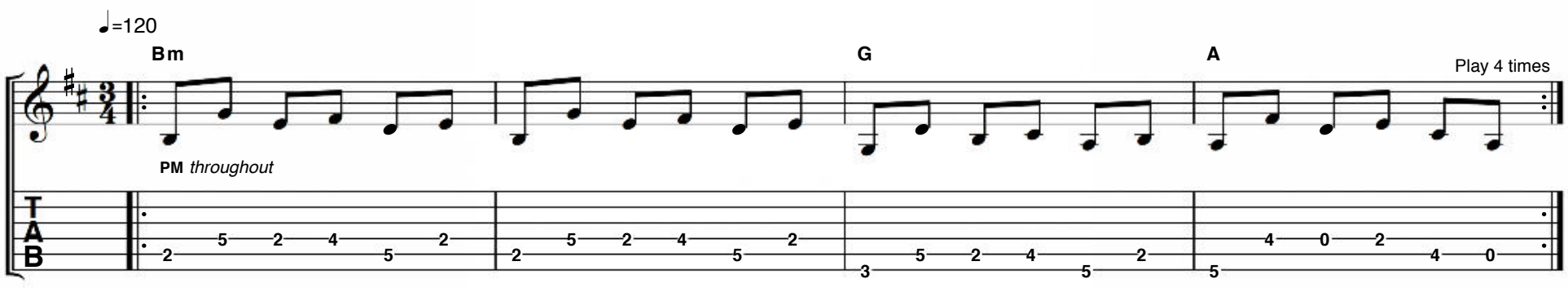
BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



Here we use the delay to create a spooky ambient effect in the vein of the Arctic Monkeys' *Dance Little Liar*. The delay is set to an eighth-note repeat (300ms, to match our track's 100bpm tempo) with the feedback set to two repeats. We've kept the effect level high (70%) for that ambient 'wet' sound.

03 DOTTED EIGHTH-NOTE DELAY

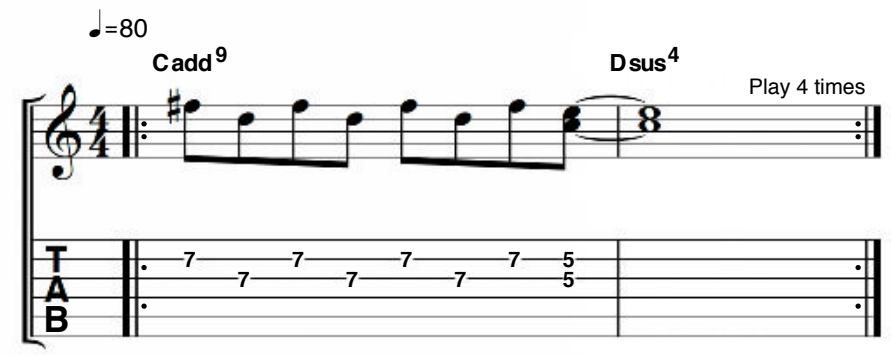
BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



This rhythmic effect appears in Buckethead's *Big Sur Moon* and Dream Theater's *Lifting Shadows Off A Dream*. These riffs are played as an even run of eighth notes, but the repeats are set to *dotted* eighth notes, so the echoes are heard in between the played notes. Our example is at 120bpm and the delay time is 375ms. The effect level is identical to the dry guitar sound.

04 GRADUAL FADE OUTS

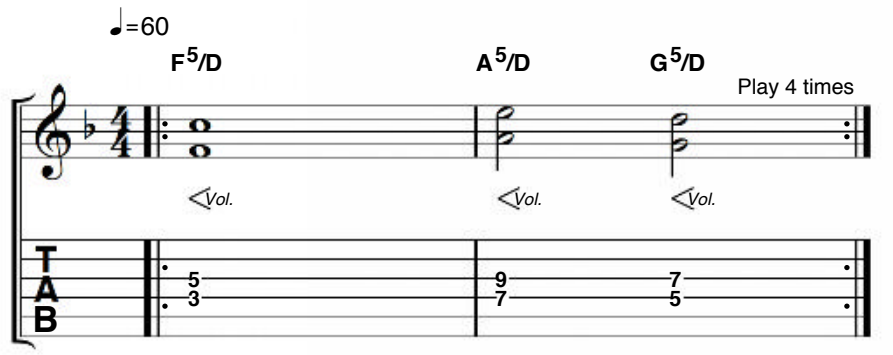
BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



Devin Townsend uses long delays for ambience and weight in songs like *Greetings* and *Truth*. In our example, the delay is set to a quarter-note triplet repeat, (500ms at 80bpm). Set a long feedback to allow the notes to gradually fade away.

05 DUAL-DELAYED SYNTH PAD EFFECT

BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



In this Tool-inspired part there are two separate delays which combine to create a smooth synth-pad-like effect. One delay is set to an eighth note (500ms) and the other is a quarter-note delay (1000ms), both with the feedback set as high as possible.

Words Alex Lynham

PEDAL SHOPPING-PING-PING!

Build your 'board with TG's delay pedal recommendations...

BOSS DD-3T

A classic all-round delay pedal

Type: Digital

The Boss DD-3 has been a staple digital delay for 30 years, and the reason is no secret – it sounds amazing. Pristine delays, a pleasant timbre, and an EQ profile that works equally well in a band context or studio mix, make this a no-brainer for everybody from bedroom musicians to pros. With this latest version, Boss has added a tap-tempo input, allowing you to use an external tap source to control the delay time.

TC ELECTRONIC FLASHBACK 2

Options galore and expression functionality, too

Type: Digital

With a decent range of presets that cover all the basics – analogue delay, tape echo, a pristine digital mode and some more sound effect-type delays, the TC Flashback 2 is an impressive piece of kit for the money. In addition to the basic feature list, it has user presets assignable via TC's powerful Toneprint software, as well as a built-in hardware expression pedal. It sounds great, with a warm, organic timbre whatever the patch.

ELECTRO-HARMONIX MEMORY BOY

Multiple modes and a dark, characterful sound

Type: Analogue

The Memory Boy is EHX's mid-range analogue offering. As you'd expect from an analogue delay, it's dark but characterful, giving a lush and organic delay sound. In terms of parameters, it's small but powerful, with modulation built in, and several modes to change the style of modulation applied to the echoes. The combination of value for money and excellent core tone make it a winner.

MXR CARBON COPY

Pure, lush analogue delay

Type: Analogue

With its gorgeous built-in modulation, the MXR Carbon Copy is a superbly distinctive- sounding pedal. Although it shines when used for a variety of different uses, it's probably most at home in the shoegaze, dream pop and ambient genres, even cropping up on a lot of post-rock guitarists' pedalboards. As you'd expect, it's a heavy-hitter on its own, but it also stacks well with other delays and creates gorgeous pad-like echoes when placed after a drive.

KATANA BASS

BOSS DEBUTS KATANA BASS AMPS

NEW 1X10 AND 2X10 COMBOS DELIVER **BOSS TONE** AND **RELIABILITY** TO LOVERS OF LOW END

BOSS has expanded its award-winning Katana range with two new bass amps, the Katana Bass-110 and 210. Both offer three pre-amp types, 4-band EQ, and comprehensive onboard effects. The 110 offers 60 watts of class AB power through one ten inch driver and a tweeter, while the 210 delivers a beefed-up 160 class AB watts through its two ten inch drivers and tweeter.

Guitarists will need little introduction to the all-conquering Katana series. The Katana guitar amps are famous for their versatility, great tones, and astonishing value. For guitarists who moonlight as bassists, the Katana Bass range will feel immediately comfortable, with the same intuitive operation and bulletproof construction as the guitar amps. Both amps offer mix-ready mic'ed cabinet tones via USB, headphones, and line out, so recording and gigging are stress-free.

Like the guitar amps, the Katana Bass's variable power control offers optimum tone at any volume, and the effects section is as powerful as you'd expect from BOSS. The dedicated comp/limiter and drive sections build the core sound, while FX1 and FX2 offer a total of 60 BOSS effects from essentials like chorus, delay, and reverb to bass synth and octave. Six Tone Setting memory slots let you store your favourite sounds.

The included BOSS Tone Studio editor allows patch editing on Mac or PC. For jamming, there's an aux in. The optional BOSS BT Dual Adapter provides Bluetooth compatibility, which allows patch tweaking from Android or iOS mobile devices. Whatever the situation, the Katana Bass has the tone and features to deliver.

> **"THE KATANA BASS'S EFFECT SECTION IS AS POWERFUL AS YOU'D EXPECT FROM THE LIKES OF BOSS"**

BOSS

Words Chris Bird Photography Eleanor Jane

JACK WHITE
21ST CENTURY GUITAR HERO

As he returns with not one, but **two solo albums**, Jack White reveals that he's in a good place with his guitar playing. "There are places I've never gone before," he says, "and **techniques I thought I wasn't capable of doing**." In our exclusive interview, Jack talks us through his guitar playing and songwriting approaches, how he balances his **trademark fuzz guitar tones with synth sounds**, and he discusses his gear preferences, from inexpensive **junk-shop instruments to modern signature models**. Also in our 22-page special feature: we chart Jack's influence as a **guitarist, writer, arranger, producer, and creator of a mini-empire** in Third Man Records, and we profile some selected highlights of his extensive gear collection. Plus! **We take you inside Jack's playing style** with our tab lessons, and show you how to play **three awesome riffs from The White Stripes** to Jack's latest solo material.

Words Joe Bosso **Portraits** Eleanor Jane

"I'M THE PROUDEST I'VE BEEN IN MY LIFE OF MY GUITAR PLAYING"

As two new solo albums illustrate the breadth of his art, **Jack White** believes that he's reaching a new peak as a guitarist. "There are places I've never gone before," he says, "and techniques I thought I wasn't capable of doing..."

It is a big statement that Jack White is making this year – with the release of not one but two new solo albums. And yet, as the man himself says, this is not the result of some intensely calculated master plan. In fact, he had no plan at all...

"I know people won't believe me when I say this, but I don't really ever have a plan to make an album once I get involved in it," he explains. "I always sort of start falling into it and find myself in the middle of it, and then I say, 'Oh, wow. I guess I should start maybe thinking about this, how it's going to relate to things I've done in the past, or what I want to do next live on stage.' But just as quickly, you can find yourself in a bunch of traps because you start overthinking the public version of what you're doing, and that's not a good place to create, really."

Jack is speaking from his home in Nashville, where these new albums were written and then recorded at his Third Man Studios. He has made a couple of public appearances over the past few years, performing on *Saturday Night Live* in 2020, and playing two concerts in London last year to mark the opening of a new Third Man Records Store in the city's Soho district. But for the most part he has been laying low in Nashville as a result of the pandemic. And while he admits that the period of forced isolation affected him deeply, it was also a key factor in the sheer volume of new songs he wrote.

Once he had recorded all this material, Jack briefly considered packaging everything on one grand double-album set – an idea he quickly rejected. Instead, he divided the material into two thematic albums. With his previous solo record, 2018's *Boarding House Reach*, he struck a balance between blitzing riff monsters and mellower songs that blended rustic country, folk and blues, but with the new albums he draws distinct lines of demarcation.

Fear Of The Dawn, released in April, features plenty of boisterous guitar action. It begins with three hellacious rock load-blowers – *Taking Me Back*, the title track and *The White Raven*, all of them brimming with bonkers solos. Elsewhere on this album, *What's The Trick* is a punishing hybrid of hip-hop and metal; *That Was Then (This Is Now)* fuses way-out acid funk with good-time 70s pop crunch; a version of Cab Calloway's *Hi-De-Ho* – featuring guest vocalist Q-Tip and Black Belles guitarist Olivia Jean – has the jazz classic reimagined as unnerving psychedelia; and on the epic *Eosophobia (Reprise)*, Jack answers the musical question: what would Steve Howe on steroids sound like?

The second of these albums, *Entering Heaven Alive*, follows on July 22, and it's a different animal altogether. A more subdued, acoustic-laced work, it showcases a softer, quieter side to Jack White. But even while he's luxuriating in the acoustic pastoral elegance of *A Tip From You To Me*, evoking lush mid-60s chamber pop on *Help Me Along* or laying his soul bare on a pair of aching ballads, *Love Is Selfish* and *If I Die Tomorrow*, there's a restlessness and an overarching feeling of anxiety that runs through the album.

Recording with other musicians during on-again, off-again lockdowns proved tricky, and on much of his new music Jack handled

the lion's share of instrumentation himself – electric and acoustic guitars, bass, keyboards, percussion, vibraphone, theremin; you name it. But he nixed the idea of performing everything on his own. "I just didn't want to get into that concept," he says. And so he waited until restrictions eased to call in an assortment of players for various tracks – chief among them drummers Daru Jones and Patrick Keeler, as well as bassists Dominic Davis and Jack Lawrence, all of whom he's worked with in the past. "I like to play with other people to get someplace new," he says. "It brings out different personalities in the songs."

In a wide-ranging conversation, Jack talks about the whole creative process that went into these albums, from writing to production. He talks about the fun he's had with guitars designed by Eddie Van Halen and St. Vincent. And he suggests that his playing on *Fear Of The Dawn* might just be the best he has ever laid down...

Let's talk first about songwriting – and how you wrote enough for two albums...
Songs were just coming out every day, and I was getting lucky. You start to hit a streak where several tracks keep pouring out. It's funny because you don't really know where they're coming from, or why they're coming, so when it's happening it's just best to get out of the way and let it happen.

"EVERY TIME I WALK INTO A ROOM WHERE THERE'S A GUITAR, I END UP PICKING IT UP. YOU NEVER STOP"

How much of this was the result of isolation during the pandemic?
It's been tragic for the entire world. The sadness of people dying and how this has disrupted everything – it's left me with a whole new respect for the fragility of human life. At the same time, as an artist, to be put in that position where I was basically told, 'You can't leave your house,' I found that inspiring. Constriction has always been something that turns me on and gets me motivated. That part wasn't hard for me at all. It was actually a blessing, and it made me have a whole rebirth.

How much time do you spend on a song before you decide if it's good enough or not?
If it doesn't sound interesting very quickly, I quickly abandon it. Every artist is different, but for me, I know pretty fast whether there's anything I can find some life in. Like riffs – every guy on the street can write a riff, but is it interesting to other people? It just comes down to taste, but along with that there's how you execute it live or in the studio. That comes down to taste, as well. Once you do all that, and you mix it and present it to people, are they going to get anything out of it? Who knows? The ability to quickly decipher whether something is interesting or not can't be taught in school. You just have to have it in you, and I don't really think I'm that good at it.

You don't?
I don't think I'm really that good at saying, "Oh, that's a great song!" But I am good at knowing if it's something I won't enjoy playing live. If it's something I don't get much out of when I listen to a mix, I get away from it and move on to something else.

Do you ever bounce things off other people? Like, 'Hey, I've got this song that I don't know about. What do you think?'
I bounce it off people once I think it's interesting. The hardest part is playing things for somebody, like, 'God, this sounds like a song somebody else already wrote. Does anybody know this song?' I do that quite often. What sucks is when you play it for fifteen other musicians and no one recognises it, and then you release it and all these people start saying, 'Oh, that sounds like *blah blah blah*.' I'm like, 'Oh, my God. Why didn't somebody mention that?' Because we're living in an era where there's been so much recorded music in the last, whatever, seventy years – it's not like 1966, when only five guys had tried it.

You've self-produced your records for quite some time. Do you ever think about using an outside producer to get another perspective?
Yeah, I might do that in the future. Producers are good for people who don't want to bother themselves with orchestration, arrangement, production, all that other stuff, and they just want to be a singer or a bass player or whatever. That's when a producer comes in handy. I'm actually more interested in the production and the direction of the stuff than I am of the actual performance part of it. For me, it's like, 'OK, I can do that. That's not a big problem, but can I bring this to life?' That's what I'm more interested in. Over the years, I've lost interest in producing other artists as much as I used to. I used to do it a lot in the early days of Third Man Records, but it's a lot more difficult because you have to understand that everybody wants something different from a producer. Some people want absolutely no input from a producer; they just want some comfort. And other people want you to do everything for them, and it's really hard to know what that is. You can't come in the room with the exact same attitude every time.

With these two new albums, how did you figure out which songs belonged on each?
This is the first time where it was like, 'Wow, this song is so heavy and this song is so soft and melancholy. They cannot go next to each other on a record.' On my computer, I had softer songs on one playlist, and the harder songs were on another. So it was kind of simple – the songs divided themselves up.

The first three songs on *Fear Of The Dawn* – *Taking Me Back*, *The White Raven* and the title track – have got really brutal guitar riffs. What is the balance between guitars and synths on those songs? It's hard to tell because the sound is so dense and overwhelming.
I would say it's probably 75 per cent guitar on the record. I recently told somebody that, on this record, I'm probably the proudest I've been in my life of my guitar playing and performing. If someone asked me, 'What's a good example of your guitar playing?' I would give them *Fear Of The Dawn* over anything else. There are places I've never gone before, and there's new techniques I thought I wasn't capable of doing. I think I was finally able to tap into thirty years of experimenting and failing, trying to get a certain tone and not really getting there. Now I actually have what you hoped you would have as you get older, which is a little bit of wisdom about how to put a mic in the right place or how to manipulate an amplifier to get what you want out of it. These are things that I wish I could back and teach my 21-year-old self how to do. I hoped that this would happen as I got older, and it's finally starting to show up now.

You played a theremin on the title track. How much practice goes into mastering one?
It's not an easy instrument to play. That was wild, because I just wanted to do one little sound effect. I turned it on and tried to get that sound to open up a section that had an empty hole, and I continued to play as more and more sounds came out that made sense. It was all about electricity, and it reminded me of the Captain Beefheart song *Electricity* that has a theremin. I thought, 'Oh, this makes sense.' I just started digging a little bit deeper. It's pretty difficult. I couldn't do exactly what I wanted to with the theremin, but I got close on a couple of moments.

HAPPY JACK
"If someone asked me,'What's a good example of your guitar playing?' I would give them *Fear Of The Dawn* over anything else," Jack says.

There is one new song, *That Was Then (This Is Now)*, that sounds like the 70s glam rock band The Sweet. Do you hear that at all?
I do. Sometimes the best ones are when someone says, 'That sounds like The Sweet,' but somebody else says, 'Oh, no, that sounds like Slade.' Then someone else says, 'No, that sounds like early Marc Bolan.' The best ones are when people say different things. When everyone says the same thing, it almost feels like a failure. I never try to reference something literally when I write; there's no point in trying to do a pastiche. For example, if I sat down and said, 'I want to write a song like The Sweet,' I probably would fail and end up sounding like Devo or something.

"EVERY GUY ON THE STREET CAN WRITE A RIFF, BUT IS IT INTERESTING TO OTHER PEOPLE?"

Speaking of references, the song *A Tip From You to Me* from *Entering Heaven Alive* is like acoustic Neil Young meets the country side of the Stones' *Exile On Main St.*
I really love that track, and at first I thought it should just be me and an acoustic guitar. Then when we got a band and I was finally able to get a couple musicians in the studio, we played it and it felt really good. Once we got to mixing, I thought, 'Wow, this has to open the album up.'

There is also a Stones vibe in *Help Me Along*, reminiscent of that pop-Elizabethan period on *Aftermath*.
Ah, okay. It's nice when you feel like a song isn't fully there yet, and you keep digging into it. That was one of those songs where I kept digging and digging, and it got better and better. Whereas sometimes, you dig and you realize you're making it worse, like you're trying to polish a mud pie. But that song was the opposite; as I layered, it got better and better. It's got four different keyboard players on it, which is crazy.

You don't mind hearing these references, do you?
No, no. I love to hear them!

Good – because *Queen Of The Bees* is a beautiful pop song that's like a classic Donovan number from the 60s.
Yeah, I can see that. It has a whimsical nature to it. It's a love song, but it could be seen as a novelty song. It's got some strangeness that I could really dig into. A lot of it was done on the new digital Mellotron. I have a real Mellotron on the album, too, but on this song it's the digital one. It was really interesting to mess around with it.

Let's talk more about gear. When you performed a tribute to Eddie Van Halen on *Saturday Night Live* in 2020, you played a guitar he had designed. Did you get to know him?
We had a bit of a relationship. What happened was, when I was doing my last album, *Boarding House Reach*, I found that the songs took weeks of rehearsal, which was something new to me. I thought, 'I want to get the easiest guitar there is to play', which is the opposite of what I normally do. I saw an interview with Eddie Van Halen and [EVH Master Builder] Chip Ellis in which they talked about building the Wolfgang

STAR TURN
Jack performs the US National Anthem prior to the Opening Day game at Comerica Park in Detroit, Michigan.

Photo Getty

EVH guitar. Eddie talked about how he didn't want to fight the guitar, and I thought, 'OK, that might be the one for me.' I bought one, and sure enough, it was so easy to play. It practically played itself. That's when I got into customizing it to my liking. I took his design, and I customized it to some specs that I like – pickups, switches, material and stuff, the paint job. But yes, he and I had a little bit of a relationship, talking back and forth, and he taught me a couple things. There were some texts. It was nice, although we never met in person, which is a shame.

You've been playing some other artists' signature models in recent years – a St. Vincent guitar and one by Jeff 'Skunk' Baxter, famous for his work in the 70s with The Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan. What brought that about?
On that tour, I wanted to use three guitars designed by other players. One was Eddie, one was Baxter, and one was St. Vincent. It was so interesting to see what other people think is the ultimate tone and versatility for their stage instruments. I think it all applied to me as I was building these custom Fender things that I used on The Raconteurs tour, along with what I'm going to be using this year. I put a lot of different ideas into the Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster, and I road-tested it. It's a heavy guitar, and after I put a lot of gadgetry in it, the weight got even heavier — which I don't mind that much. We changed the B-bender situation in the Tele, so now there's a B-bender and a G-bender, but no Bigsby for all six strings.

There was a time when you became the poster boy for inexpensive guitars. A lot of people followed your lead.
Yeah, that kind of shocked me – I was surprised that people liked anything I was doing back then. Also, it was surprising that they would find the guitars I was playing interesting because it was something I always loved and had been doing for years. The garage rock scene in Detroit and across the country were into finding lesser-known guitars. I was very deep into that stuff, and I think we just caught a moment where people got turned onto what the possibilities are with those other models. It's great to see that it's still around today. I still see a bit of that infatuation, which the internet helped progress a bit. What's great now is how you can find these things so easily. I always tell people that I looked for a 100-watt Silvertone amp for probably eight years before I found one. That's how hard it was back then. You had to go to conventions; you had to go to every guitar shop in every town you went to. I never saw one. Now, of course, you can buy one on Reverb or in two seconds. When I was in The White Stripes, Jack Oblivian [Memphis-born guitarist and garage rock cult hero] sold me that red Airline guitar for 250 bucks. I don't think I saw another one for five years. That's what it was like back then. When you found a good thing, you held on to it like gold because you know that you're never going to see it again.

Have any new guitars made their first appearances on these albums?
Just a new Fender that I'm working on – a custom one. Chip Ellis has been helping me a lot at Fender. It's been really great to be able to dream up an idea and have these talented people make it come to life. That's a real blessing. I'm glad I finally decided to do that, because I love to design and construct things like that. I wish I had done it earlier, but I'm glad I'm doing it now. I'm really getting a lot of life out of it, and it's inspiring me to pick up the guitar. I can't wait to go on stage with this guitar.

You've said how proud you are of your guitar playing these days. But do you ever sit and 'practise'?
It never needs to be scheduled – it just happens. I think that's what goes on with people like me. I couldn't do anything else, so my life was always dedicated to music. Every time I walk into a room where there's a guitar, I end up picking it up, or I sit down at a piano. You never stop. I think the only thing I really need to do right now is go back and learn all the chord structures from these new songs for the tour rehearsals. That's what I've got to go refresh my brain about, because there's so many new songs.

Words Amit Sharma
Portrait Eleanor Jane

TRACK BY TRACK

Fear Of The Dawn

The tones and techniques of Jack's eclectic new album

1 Taking Me Back

The big single, released back in October last year, is a near-perfect presentation of everything guitar players love about Jack White. The opening fanfare of harmonised feedback is brief and abrupt, exploding into the same idea played on the lower string, bouncing from A to B before moving down a step from G to A. It's a simple enough idea, though it's White's finishing touches that give it gravitas – from its behind-the-beat feel to the descending slides that follow on from the main punches. In the video, he is seen playing a blue sparkle custom Telecaster through a pedalboard that includes a Triplegraph – the octave pedal he co-designed with CopperSound a few years ago – as well as other favourites like his Mantic Flex, a Bumble Buzz and a Game Changer Audio Plasma Coil.

2 Fear Of The Dawn

With its up-tempo swing and minor sensibilities, the main riff throwing an open E against minor sixth and perfect fifth intervals, the album's title track could very well be one of its heaviest. There's a meaty, almost synth-like fuzz on its rhythm parts and other extreme effects that venture beyond traditional guitar playing and into the world of sound design. Though only two minutes and two seconds in length, the track features a considerable amount of lead playing – White unleashing his inner Ritchie Blackmore for the grand finale before its jam band ending. Electrifying stuff!

3 The White Raven

Though its opening riff feels more like the kind of thing Tool guitarist Adam Jones would come up with, *The White Raven* quickly unravels into something unexpectedly electronic in execution – the guitars, bass and synths calling and answering each other in ways not too dissimilar to different sections of the same orchestra. The solo starts with some Tom Morello-esque envelope filtering before some big A-minor pentatonic bends up around the 12th fret with a thick and creamy type of fuzz engaged. Closing with the same idea it started with, you can't help but wonder what this would have turned out like if White had continued in the same vein, but it's a strong track nevertheless.

4 Hi-De-Ho (with Q-Tip)

Having recruited a band of hip-hop session musicians for 2018's *Boarding House Reach*, while also citing the genre as "the new punk rock" expressing an equally "dangerous side of music", this collaboration between White and American rapper Q-Tip isn't as much of a curveball as some might think. That doesn't make it any less ambitious, however, navigating together sludgy fuzz, feedback and world music before arriving at a D Aeolian funk line and a mid-section vamp that goes from D-minor to A-minor.

5 Eosophobia

From its delay-effected acoustic intro to its reggae shuffles and scratchy punk rock chords, there's a lot to take in before *Eosophobia* has even reached its first minute. Moments later there's a single-note riff section which switches from B7 to AMaj7 arpeggios with some clever usage of delay to double up countrified staccato lines, not a million miles away from what Nuno Bettencourt was doing on his *Flight Of The Wounded Bumblebee* solo from Extreme's second album. All in all, it's a track that stands as one of Jack's most eclectic to date.

KIND OF BLUE
The *Fear Of The Dawn* cover art, created by Jennifer Dionisio.

6 Into The Twilight

There's definitely a hip-hop and funk feel to certain sections of the album's sixth track, even if the large majority of its guitars are centred around D major and F major chords voiced through an early glam rock kind of crunch. The octave-layered single-note D minor pentatonic lines, for example, are reminiscent of the grooves typified by 90s acid jazz bands like Jamiroquai, while other parts are more experimental, incorporating a cosmic collage of noises and sound effects.

7 Dusk

Only 30 seconds long, with a watery vibe or phase effect over its B Aeolian motif, *Dusk* is a moody interlude that fades in and out of nowhere. For vinyl listeners it opens side B with ethereal modulation and minor key contemplation.

8 What's The Trick?

You can't have a rock album without a song in G, which is exactly why *What's The Trick?* fills its own sonic corner on the record. Using what sounds like a killswitch and lots of fuzz to almost imitate Tom Morello playing the main riff from Guns N' Roses' *Paradise City*, it's a song with an abundance of attitude – White almost rapping some of his lines at points, before kicking in his octave fuzz for some screaming Hendrixian leads.

9 That Was Then (This Is Now)

Arguably closer to The White Stripes

than any of the other songs on this record, *That Was Then (This Is Now)* has a riff tailor-made for conquering festival crowds, built around single-note lines in A Ionian and A Mixolydian. That all changes halfway through as White sings the title lyrics, gearing into punk rock power chords and highly compressed drum loops – the singer-songwriter showing self-awareness of his own sonic evolution through the years.

10 Eosophobia (Reprise)

It may very well be a reprise, but this tenth track could very well stand as White's defining guitar hero moment on the album. Starting off with the staccato arpeggios using the same single-note slapback heard earlier on, the guitarist then whips through some E minor pentatonic runs that – thanks to the repeats – feel almost synth-like in delivery. There's then a shift to a reggae groove in B, the guitarist using bends to cry in the style Eric Clapton and Carlos Santana before cranking up the fuzz even further for his final searing lead. Truth be told, this could very well be the greatest White has sounded on guitar.

11 Morning, Noon And Night

Built around the B Dorian scale, the lower octave layers heard on this penultimate track are what give it such a unique sense of weight. During the chorus section you can hear White adding the sixth string to his second fret B power chord, adding a lower fifth interval to thicken out his overdriven guitars even further. The guitar solo halfway in is quite possibly the closest White has ventured towards jazz fusion, using outside notes likes the minor second in a phrase playing off the two higher strings, as well as flat five dissonances. In all fairness, it's a side of White we'd all love to hear more of.

12 Shedding My Velvet

Showcasing a more minimalistic approach to lead guitar than the tracks building up to it, *Shedding My Velvet* features some melancholic ideas in E Aeolian around its hip-hop grooves and muted bass lines, as well as a rhythmic octave line that descends from a G played twice, down to an F# and finally the root. There's a final taste of those layered single-note octave lines before the sombre acoustic outro that rounds off one of White's finest solo releases to date.

Words Jenna Scaramanga
Portrait Paige Sara

The Many Faces of Jack White

Innovator. Visionary. Gearhead. And a guitar hero like no other. Jack White is all of these things and more...

In the heyday of the guitar hero, the 1960s and 70s, you could hardly move for them. Guitars were the dominant instrument in popular culture and those who could conjure riffs were gods among mortals. But while great new electric guitarists turn up daily, guitar heroes – names bordering on the mythical, who take over the mainstream and whose names become synonymous with awesome licks – come along less often. In the 21st Century, the one who stands tallest is Jack White.

One man who graduated from guitar hero to guitar god is Jeff Beck. When Beck invited The White Stripes to join him on stage at his 2002 Royal Festival Hall residency, it suggested a passing of the torch. Beck, who many call the greatest living guitarist, spotted White's genius.

The White Stripes were then known only as one of the 'The' bands, disparate garage rock revivalists who all happened to hit success in 2001. Other leading figures in the moment were The Hives, The Strokes and The Vines. 'The' bands represented a punk rock reaction against nu metal, much as grunge was to hair metal ten years earlier. At a time when metal albums were overproduced into oblivion, every element digitally shifted to be metronomically in time, garage rock was a refreshing celebration of the lo-fi, the loose, and the lairy.

Strange as it seems now, it was initially unclear which of the 'The' bands would be the movement's Beatles and which its Herman's Hermits. Unclear to all except perhaps Jeff Beck, who saw the spark.

Jack White is a genuine polymath – guitarist, writer, arranger, producer, gear aficionado and creator of a mini-empire in Third Man Records. Here, TG profiles an extraordinary career: The Many Faces Of Jack White...

THE TRAILBLAZER

When The White Stripes' self-titled debut album was released in 1999, back when Jack was still married to drummer Meg White, some critics dismissed the duo format as a gimmick. But the lack of a bassist served Jack and Meg's vision. Being a duo made them agile. They could deliver tempo changes and cue hits with eye contact that is hard to orchestrate with bigger ensembles.

It also gave Jack unlimited sonic space. His note choices when soloing were unconstrained by the need to harmonise with anyone else, and his guitar tone could be anything he wanted without worrying about blending with the bass. You might expect that meant a huge, bass-heavy tone, but White opted for a snotty, obnoxious sound, especially on the early records. Detroit garage rock forebears The MC5 and The Stooges were an obvious point of comparison, but the rough production on White Stripes albums also recalled early blues.

The ratty sound quality recalled tapes by Alan Lomax, the musicologist who made field recordings of pioneers like Lead Belly and Muddy Waters. Those unaccompanied blues performances often changed tempo and rhythm unexpectedly, a quality the bassless White duo could easily imitate.

Now, thanks in large part to The White Stripes' success, rock duos no longer seem unlikely. The Black Keys actually predated Jack and Meg, but they received a commercial bump from the industry's sudden interest in blues-influenced twosomes. Royal Blood are the most obvious beneficiaries of the Stripes' blazed trail, but MGMT, The Kills, and a host of less famous pairings also followed in their wake.

RIGHT
Guitarist, writer, arranger, producer, and much more. Jack White is a genuine polymath.

THE GUITAR HERO

Guitar heroes are not only great guitarists. You can tell this by thinking about who qualifies as one. Keith Richards, Slash, and Jimi Hendrix are guitar heroes; YouTube shredders, your guitar teacher, and Andrés Segovia are not. White is effortlessly believable as a rock star. Admittedly he'd never trash a hotel room – he's expressed too much sympathy for the workers who clean them – but that just makes him seem more in tune with the people. Joe Bonamassa has become famous playing the guitar, but he remains, by his own admission, unabashedly nerdy. White, like Prince or David Bowie, is enigmatic enough that if you learned he'd been born in another solar system, you'd only be briefly surprised.

The White Stripes' position as just one 'The' band among many changed with their major label debut *Elephant*.

"JEFF BECK SPOTTED WHITE'S GENIUS EARLY"

Its unstoppable first single *Seven Nation Army* is undoubtedly the biggest riff of the 21st Century. And as recognisable as even *Smoke On The Water* thanks to its adoption on football terraces, *Seven Nation Army* gave The White Stripes a hit that everybody's parents know. If Jack White was his generation's Kurt Cobain, *Seven Nation Army* was his *Smells Like Teen Spirit*.

Elephant included a ton of solos, marking the arrival of Jack White the guitar hero. Guitar magazines were slow to hail White's lead playing because it wasn't technical, but it was the kind of playing that made people excited about the guitar. That year Rolling Stone magazine ranked him the 17th greatest guitarist of all time, which looked premature at the time and prescient now. As Kurt had on *Teen Spirit*, White made an epic track even bigger by sticking close to the melody for the solo in *Seven Nation Army*. The lead break in *There's No Home For You Here* opened with a Hendrix-worthy burst of sustained feedback, before Jack's chaotic DigiTech Whammy abuse began. The notes were almost all pentatonic, but the frenzied pitch shifting made it sound totally unconventional.

While specialist blues magazines lamented declining audiences and a lack of new mainstream stars, The White Stripes dedicated albums to blues pioneers Son House and Blind Willie McTell. *Elephant* had *Ball And Biscuit*, a pure blues song hiding in plain sight on a number 1 album. That song and *Black Math* made prominent use of Jack's 'stutter' technique, perhaps his biggest playing innovation. It sounded like a rapidly executed killswitch, but there was no killswitch on his Airline guitar, and live performances saw him creating the effect standing away from his pedalboard. It stumped many guitarists, and YouTube still features several incorrect explanations of how it's done. White was bouncing his picking hand off the string. The flesh of his index finger caught the string as the pick came down, choking it, and then the pick brushed the string as he bounced off, sounding the note. His fuzz pedal exaggerated the staccato effect by acting like a noise gate.

The Stripes' burgeoning popularity gave global audiences the chance to see White live, where he truly excelled. His spontaneous freakouts, powered by the same nervous energy that drives his frenetic vibrato, were at their best when feeding off an audience. His habit of kicking the Whammy pedal in and out mid-lick could make even blues clichés sound like nothing anyone had heard. *Elephant* had seen White begin to embrace octave effects to fill out the bass frequencies, and his Whammy-equipped tone sounded monstrous at festivals across the world. Live, the *Seven Nation Army* solo could become a wild affair, riotously over-sliding for the high notes while keeping the general shape of the melody. This reckless abandon would have sounded disastrous with a bassist, but unaccompanied it just worked.

Their showmanship made The White Stripes memorable TV guests, too. On their *Later... With Jools Holland* debut, Jack snapped his fifth string. Where other acts would have gone for another take, Jack coolly retuned mid solo and finished the song. While performing *Let's Build A Home* on *Tonight With Conan O'Brien*, White left the stage to slam his Crestwood Astral onto O'Brien's desk, using it as a lap steel and pummeling the guitar with stuttering pyrotechnics.

After a detour for the more piano-driven *Get Behind Me Satan*, in 2007 The White Stripes rocked hard on their final album *Icky Thump*, a celebration of guitar. While the title track wasn't as eminently chantable as *Seven Nation Army*, for our money it's an even better riff. His mixture of palm muting and slide for the riffs on *Catch Hell Blues* again showed his knack for making well-worn ideas sound new with his unique approach. Touring, however, became increasingly unmanageable due to Meg's anxiety, and by 2011 the duo would confirm they were calling it quits.

RIGHT
Jack with his famous Res-O-Glass Airline.

Photos Getty

THE TEAM PLAYER

Even as The White Stripes exploded, White found time to start another band. The Raconteurs debuted in 2006 showing that White could fit discretely into a five-piece band (if you count touring keyboardist Dean Fertita) just as well as he could dominate proceedings. The psychedelic and power-pop stylings of The Raconteurs were far more conventionally radio-friendly than The White Stripes, but White's experience as an improviser was still key to proceedings. As co-frontman Brendan Benson would later put it, "With the Raconteurs it's like, 'how far can we go with not playing the song?'" Live, album closer *Blue Veins* became a titanic blues epic, with the band dropping out for parts of White's extended solo.

But guitar extravanganzas were not The Raconteurs' principal game. Their tightly crafted pop tunes showed that White could serve the song just as well as explode it. This was further confirmed when White formed The Dead Weather with The Kills' Alison Mosshart, Queens Of The Stone Age guitarist Dean Fertita, and Raconteurs bandmate Jack Lawrence on bass. White played drums, giving Mosshart and Fertita the intimidating job of playing guitar in front of their generation's biggest guitar hero. Fertita, though, insisted it was "an easy relationship", adding, "I might want to go on and on doing takes, but having another guitar player there to say 'that was a cool one' makes my job a lot easier... He never suggests what I play or insists on anything."

As The White Stripes ended, White spread his talents into multiple genres. He produced and played on Loretta Lynn's 2004 release *Van Lear Rose*, helping make the country legend's first album in over a decade the most successful of her career. Jack's understated slide licks showed he could deliver pure roots music without pedalboard gimmicks. Later, Jack duetted with Alicia Keys on *Another Way To Die* from *Quantum Of Solace*, supplying the filthiest guitar ever heard in James Bond theme. Panned at the time as a poor choice for Bond, it remains terminally underrated in its own right. Its existence, though, was a reminder that you call White for big riffs just as surely as you know who to call when there's something strange in ya neighbourhood.

When Beyoncé wanted a rock song in 2016, she summoned White to co-write and co-produce. This collaboration might have been a 21st century *Beat It*, but disappointingly White elected to put barely any guitar on it. It was nevertheless nominated for a Grammy for Best Rock Performance, although apart from the drums sampled from Zeppelin's *When The Levee Breaks*, there's not much rock about it. But this again showed White as a musician, not merely a guitarist. Piling on his guitar might have boosted his ego, but in the current musical climate, it wouldn't have been what the song needed. It did, however, have a hook that could have been a monster guitar riff, as his solo performances of the song have shown.

THE GEARHEAD

While the enigmatic White would never write "Welcome to Nerdville" above the entrance to his studio, his gear choices betray a geekiness that is every inch the equal of Joe Bonamassa's. But where Bonamassa's collection is all the most elite boutique gear, White has a love of junk shop finds. In a review of *Icky Thump*, Rolling Stone critic Robert Christgau quipped that Jack had "hauled new detritus into his theoretical garage." But the garage was anything but theoretical, and Jack's new sounds have often come from unloved old gear, which he would, as he put it, fight to get them to sound good.

Jack's love of stuttering sounds has found him discovering numerous ways to produce them. For the Raconteurs' first tour he kept a killswitch pedal on top of his amp which he operated with his picking hand at crucial moments. On recordings, he experimented with adding tremolo effects or even splicing in silences to finished takes to create the desired effect.

He was ahead of the curve in adopting phase-locked loop (PLL) synth-fuzz pedals. Already popular with synth users, phase-locked loops are oscillators that maintain a relationship between the input and the output, so although the noises are chaotic and glitchy, they are harmonious. White's adoption of the Mantic Flex monophonic PLL for his solo on *Why Walk A Dog?* brought them to the attention of guitarists as a bold new sound. While many listeners assumed the diving pitch sounds were produced by a Whammy, they actually came from the Flex.

There were signs, however, that White has become less interested in fighting his gear over time. In 2018 he picked up an EVH Wolfgang after reading that Eddie had designed a guitar that would not fight him at all. And he named his favourite amp as the 15" speaker version of the Fender Vibroverb, noting that players with great tone like Stevie Ray Vaughan and Duane Eddy had used them. His Raconteurs guitar rig expanded to include custom shop Gibsons and Fenders, a sign perhaps that White was ready for guitars that co-operate with his efforts at making music.

The recording of the Raconteurs' 2019 album *Help Us Stranger* gives a few clues to White's continuing greatness. He continued to innovate, constructing (with help from Fender's custom shop) the Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster. This hot-rod inspired affair had a strap-operated B-bender, plus lever-operated Hipshot G- and E-benders, plus a switch for Drop D inspired by the EVH D-tuna. For pickups, it included a single coil bridge, P90 middle, and a neck wide-range humbucker pinched from an old Tele Thinline. A momentary killswitch, also inspired by EVH, made his stuttering effects more accessible. He continued to champion PLL sounds, most obviously on *Sunday Driver*. This was White the inventor, always in search of new sounds. On the other hand, the album also saw him recording for the first time with a classic setup he had long avoided: a Les Paul into a Fender Champ. This was White the realist, choosing the sound that worked for the songs, even if it killed his contrarian impulses to use such a conventional rig.

With CopperSound pedals, White has recently developed the Triplegraph polyphonic octave pedal. This beast of a pedal can produce upper and lower octaves via either momentary or latching modes, and boasts (what else?) a momentary killswitch mode for effortless stuttering. But by distributing these pedals, as well as the Mantic Flex, through his own Third Man company, White has shown a commitment to making unique sounds accessible, rather than keeping them all to himself.

THE RECORD MAN

Jack registered the Third Man name back in 2001, but he didn't do anything with the label until 2008, when The White Stripes stopped recording and he acquired the rights to their back catalogue. With Third Man Records, White is a self-appointed keeper of the flame of American roots music. He's reissued classics by Blind Willie McTell and The Supremes, and released the entire recorded works of 1930s guitar-and-fiddle group The Mississippi Sheiks. He's also financed new music by legends: as well as the aforementioned Loretta Lynn, White produced and released rockabilly queen Wanda Jackson's comeback. He's also nurtured young artists careers, making him the curator of a collection of great music.

Third Man has one of only three vinyl pressing plants in the US, and its rolling record store, a converted bus, made its debut at SXSW in 2011. There are now Third Man venues in London, Nashville, and Detroit, making the beginnings of an analogue empire.

THE TORCH HOLDER

White's reputation as a guitarist was cemented for many by his selection as the new kid, alongside legends Jimmy Page and The Edge, for 2009 documentary *It Might Get Loud*. That selection of players reflected differences between musicians and non-musicians about what makes a great guitarist. While Page was an obvious choice, guitar magazine readers would probably have voted for Eddie Van Halen to represent the 80s, and perhaps Matt Bellamy or Mark Tremonti for the present day. White, however, instantly won over audiences by playing slide on a one-string diddly bow he hastily built from a plank! Later in the film, his solo rendition of *I Fought Piranhas* showed a guitarist as steeped in the history of the instrument as he was invested in moving it forward. He clearly worshipped the blues, but he was interested in performing it as he felt it should be today, not being a historic re-enactor. In that sense, he was the natural heir to Page – a view cemented in the public imagination by Page's endorsement.

LEFT
Jack wielding his custom Gretsch 'Copper Triple Jet' onstage.

Photos Getty

The Page similarities don't end there. While both are most famous as guitarists, they are arguably even more talented as producers, arrangers, songwriters, and band leaders. Both have a vision of how they want music to be, and a mastery of every aspect of the process to bring that vision into reality. Both are crafters of earth-shattering riffs. And both have technical limitations as guitarists, but their histrionic delivery has a power more refined players can't touch. *It Might Get Loud* also hinted at White's solo future. *Fly Farm Blues*, knocked out in 10 minutes during the making of the documentary, became his first solo single. Sounding like a John Lee Hooker song played back through a fuzz pedal, it was a moment of garage-blues inspiration.

In October 2020, the producers of *Saturday Night Live* found themselves with an unexpected vacancy for a musical guest. Coincidentally, Eddie Van Halen had died the same week, and SNL wanted a guitar hero. Jack White got the call, appearing with his blue EVH Wolfgang and throwing in a tapping lick at the end of *Lazaretto*. Jack, for his part, modestly wrote on Instagram: "I won't even insult the man's talent by trying to play one of his songs." The implication from the show, however, was clear: this generation's greatest guitarist was saying farewell to the last.

"JACK'S NEW SOUNDS HAVE OFTEN COME FROM UNLOVED OLD GEAR"

Words Jonathan Horsley **Portraits** Eleanor Jane

Jack White and the retro future of guitar

What can we learn from Jack's gear? Looking through his collection, it's clear he is at once the junk store aficionado and the nutty professor, chasing tones that exist out of the pop-cultural timeline...

Jack White cast himself as a rock 'n' roll revivalist as The White Stripes were making their bones at the Gold Dollar in Detroit, reanimating garage punk with the hectic industrial pulse of the city. But that was never the whole story.

Over the years he has been equally a Nikola Tesla figure, an innovator, taking a pedalboard ex machina approach to electric guitar tone, demonstrating a design and entrepreneurial acumen that has made his label, Third Man Records, a self-sustaining indie powerhouse.

His gear choices add to the intrigue. This is the man who coated his go-to 50s Kay archtop with paper and made the Airline fibre-glass bodied electric a must-have, and yet he does not restrict himself to pawnshop gold. Heck, he was on the cover of this magazine with a Gretsch White Penguin. That day, he said guitars were tools be treated with "respect or disgrace". He might be onto something.

PAWNSHOP GOLD

1964 'JB Hutto' Res-O-Glass Airline Guitar

Think of Jack White and the chances are it will be this retro electric that comes to mind. It was a model long forgotten, an oddity comprised of a hollow fibreglass body, with a pair of Valco single-coils in humbucker-sized covers, a non-adjustable neck with few high-profile users. Rory Gallagher used one but its found its true calling in The White Stripes, its voice just the thing for a sound that stood astride the threshold of garage punk chaos. They used to be cheap. But for a while in the 2000s they were the coolest guitar you could find, and amid an over-heating market for vintage models Eastwood made a reissue.

50s Kay Archtop

Covered in paper to stop it squealing or to make it look good? It certainly won't play good, at least not in the conventional sense. But then Jack White has spoken before relishing a little fight with a guitar. Wrestling a difficult setup can yield some great tones; it'll make you play harder, too. The Kay, however, is parked in open A and used for slide, perhaps the only technique that finds tender mercy in a guitar's high action. He recently used it to play the national anthem at Comerica Park, home of the Detroit Tigers.

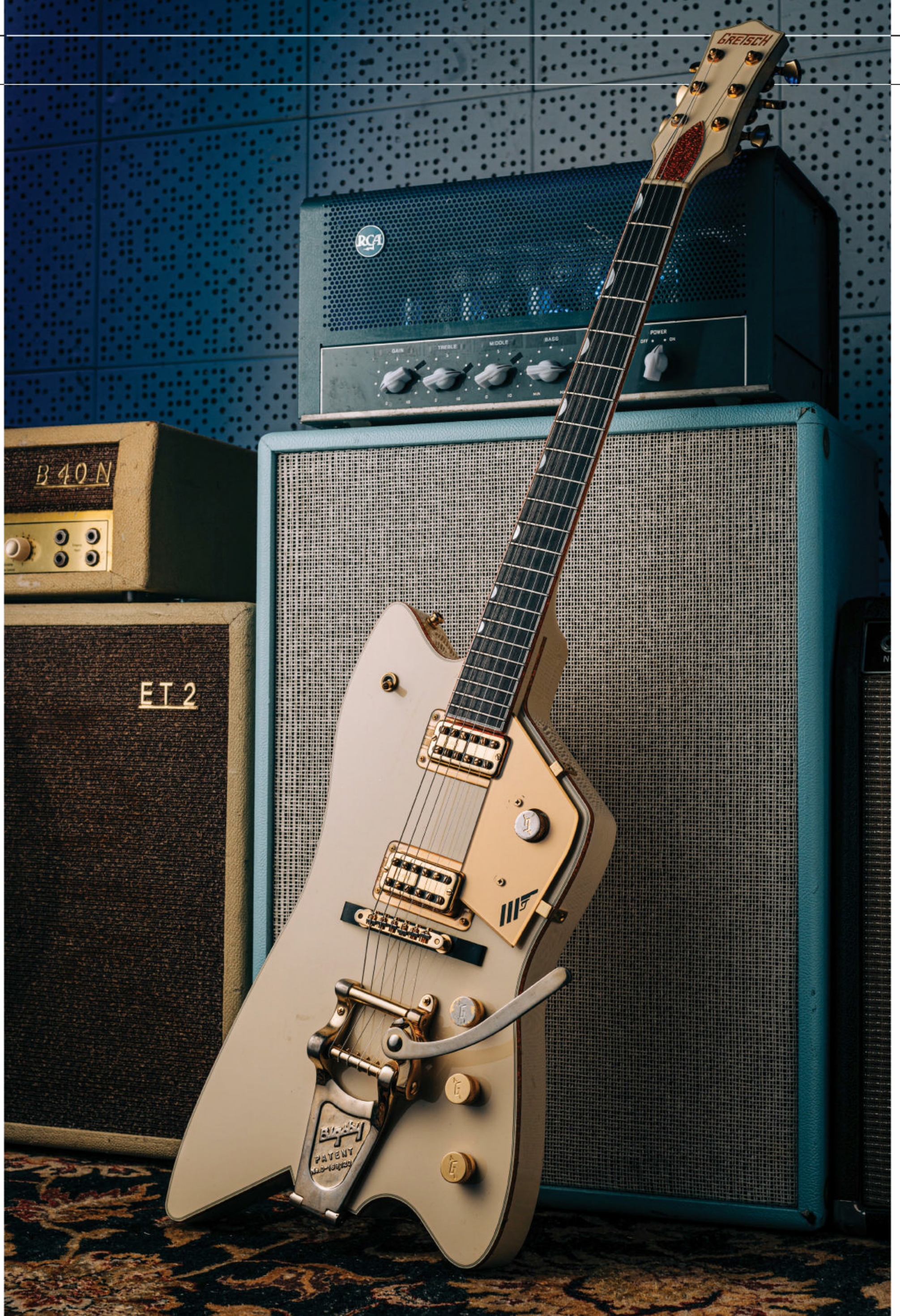
RIGHT
Jack's rarer-than-rare Gretsch 1957 G6199 Jupiter Thunderbird

1970s Crestwood Astral II

The 1970s were not altogether kind on guitar design and manufacturing but then it did bring forth some thrift store curios that seem tailor-made for gear iconoclasts. Again, this is another from the early days of The White Stripes, and like the Airline, it was also subject to an Eastwood remake. It is the sort of guitar that deserves a ramshackle tube amp in need of a service and a capricious germanium fuzz to bring the best out of it. White has also used a variety of Harmony Meter and Rocket hollowbodies, each providing a variation on the theme – big on resonance and free-radical quirks, low on price, and very cool.

1969 Fender Telecaster with Bigsby / 1954 Fender Telecaster

Thematically and spiritually, the Fender Telecaster was made for White. It is the hammer reborn as electric guitar, the ultimate tool. You can hear these across The White Stripes catalogue, and later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Fender
TELECASTER
Echolette
KLEMT
B40N
Echolette
ET2

White would bring onboard some more modded Teles, but alongside the Airline and Kay guitars, these Teles were crucial in the recording of *Icky Thump*.

1957 Gretsch G6134 White Penguin

The guitar from TG's 2007 cover, this high-end bird was purchased in Nashville around 2007, and it was not a purchase White made lightly. Understandably, given the retail price on such a rare vintage bird. Weirdly, he said it performed not unlike the Airline, and that is one of the big lessons we can take from White's gear choice. Price doesn't matter; feel and tone are everything.

Gretsch 1957 G6199 Jupiter Thunderbird

Rarer than hen's teeth, with reportedly only 12 to 16 models made, White most notably used this retro-futuristic electric with the Dead Weather.

OFF-MENU CUSTOM BUILDS

Modded Gretsch 'Copper Triple Jet'

Working with Randy Parsons, White took the double-cutaway chassis of a Jet and turned it into a three-pickup monster with an MXR Micro Amp wired to the middle pickup to provide on-tap overdrive. As White explained to *Guitar Player*, he liked the elemental nature of the copper top, and for The Raconteurs, everything had to be copper – microphones, pedals, the lot. "We even went as far as putting copper frets on that guitar –just to see how it sounded," said White. "It sounded incredible! But copper is so malleable that the frets wore out after one show."

Modded Gretsch Anniversary Jr 'Triple Green Machine'

Take one G6118, make it a double cutaway and a third pickup, and you might have something worth showing your friends. But here's a guitar that shows you how White's mind works. This mutant Gretsch, spec'd up with Randy Parsons, speaks to the showman in White – not to mention the MacGyver – housing a wooden replica of a 'green bullet' Shure mic that can be pulled out and screamed into, and a theremin for added *Twilight Zone* noise. It also features MXR Micro Amp routed to the middle pickup a la the 'Copper Triple Jet' and a lever-controlled mute for string-dampening. It is a bizarro guitar, and yet so practical.

Three Golden Gibsons: Fort Knox Les Paul, Flying V, Skunk Baxter Firebird

Another instance of an elementary metal catching White's magpie eye, the Three Golden Gibsons project all share the 'Fort Knox' treatment, with Gold Top bodies, gold hardware, and a suite of custom appointments. The Les Paul – a real heavyweight – came first, a gift from Gibson with White specifying a maple neck. But after surprising him with a Flying V in a similar treatment, White ordered a third Firebird to Skunk Baxter specs. These were used for The Raconteurs.

Gretsch G6022CWFF Rancher Falcon 'Rita'

This cutaway acoustic looks like it is on loan from Dollywood but turn it around and you'll see where it gets its name, Kore Flatmo's pyrographic illustration of film icon Rita Hayworth. It was used extensively on the *Icky Thump* tour. Besides the Rita drawing, using red sparkle vinyl instead of the gold flake you'd see on a White Falcon model is an aesthetic power move. Sound-wise, it's got big, deep lungs.

Fender Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster

Perhaps the ultimate Telecaster to come out of the Fender Custom Shop, this was once a Nashville Tele with a B-bender, but has been souped-up beyond recognition. Finished in Low Rider Metallic Orange, it has an inspired pickup trio of a Lace Sensor single-coil at the bridge, P-90 in the middle and Wide Range humbucker at the neck, and a kill-switch for kicks. There is also a G bender too, and a D-Tuna style mechanism for Drop D tuning on the fly.

EFFECTS, GIZMOS, WEIRD STUFF, AND AMPLIFIERS

Peppermint Triple Tremelo

A rotating speaker unit with three types of Leslie inside, a peppermint visual display and two speeds, this was designed and built by White himself, and wired up by Johnny Walker.

Sears Silvertone 1485 6x10 amp

This was a very different beast to any of the amps manufactured by Danelectro in the '60s. The six 10" Jensen C10Q speakers in the cabinet would see to that, with a twin-power amp sections driving three speakers apiece. Alongside the faithful Fender Twin, the Silvertone was elemental in finding White's early guitar sound.

LEFT
Jack's Fender Custom Shop Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster. Truly retro-futuristic...

Fender Twin Reverb

The best-sounding clean amp in the world? Possibly, and it is duly sweetened by a spring reverb that is pure Americana, and the perfect platform for White's tone.

DigiTech Whammy

Offering pitch-shifting via treadle, the Whammy is arguably the greatest performance-related effects pedal of its generation and is a perennial on White's 'board. Most notably used on *Seven Nation Army*.

Electro-Harmonix POG

The POG was behind White's organ-esque tone on *Blue Orchid*, and its octave effects have become one of White's signature sounds, later inspiring his collaboration with CopperSound Pedals.

CopperSound Triplegraph

This is the archetypal White collaboration, taking one obsession – namely octave pedals – and then reaching into archive of electrical engineering to borrow a trio of Morse Code telegraph-style footswitches for a pedal that reimagines octave pedals as a concept. One switch activates an octave-up effect, the other an octave-down, with the middle switch allowing you to momentarily take your dry signal out of the effect for full-on octave madness. Alternatively, use that middle footswitch to bring in external effects and turn them on momentarily. Like the Whammy, it presents pitch-shifting in a radical, performance-facing way.

Electro-Harmonix Big Muff Pi

The last word has to go to the pedalboard staple that puts hair and teeth into White's guitar tone. You could pare his 'board down to this and a Whammy pedal and get through a White Stripes set, with the Pi serving up a hot dish of sustaining fuzz that sticks to the ribs. Ideal for a single-guitar band when you need to give your sound a sense of scale and width without losing aggression.

CHANGE YOUR STRIPES

Here we look at some techniques and tonal tricks to help you play like Jack

Play like Jack White… That's easy, right? Well, in some respects perhaps, yes. The open chords and basic strumming in The White Stripes' *Dead Leaves And The Dirty Ground*, for example, are achievable for all but absolute beginners.

Jack spread his guitar-playing wings with Brendan Benson in The Raconteurs, and his epic Jimmy Page-inspired solos in live shows are something to behold. But it's since 2012's solo debut, *Blunderbuss*, that his musical eccentricity and broad range of influences have truly shone through.

Still, there are consistent threads in his playing throughout his entire career – and his tone is at the heart of it. Get a ballpark White-esque tone and you'll find it easier to get a feel for his playing. Fuzz-driven, octave- and powerchord-based riffs figure highly, alongside ear-catching pentatonic and Whammy pedal-infused solos. Check out our 'Play Like Jack' tab examples complete with playing tips and tonal advice below.

SOUND ADVICE…
Essential gear tips for the Jack White tone

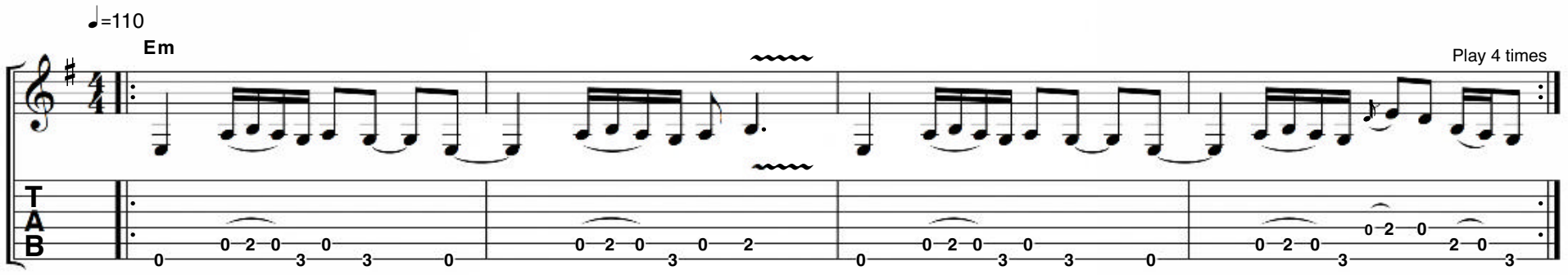
Jack has experimented with various pedals over the years, but these three pedals should form the core of any tribute rig.

1 ELECTRO-HARMONIX BIG MUFF PI
Wind up the distortion on this classic fuzz pedal. You're aiming for maximum compression.

2 ELECTRO-HARMONIX POG
Used for both octave-up and octave-down sounds, it's an essential effect to have in your arsenal.

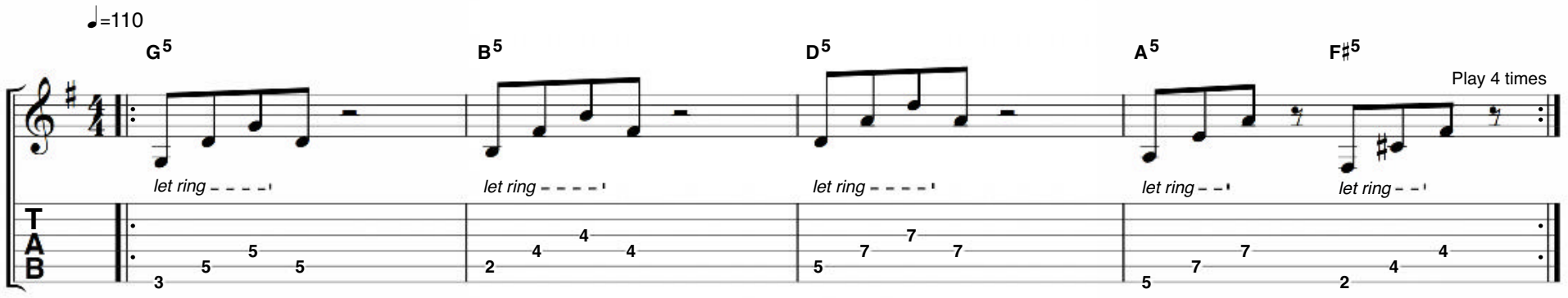
3 DIGITECH WHAMMY
Don't own one? Any expression pedal-equipped digital multi-effects floorboard will have a similar option.

MEDIUM FUZZ AND OCTAVER
BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



This riff is based in the E minor pentatonic scale in open position – though it's the kind of riff you can transpose to any octave and fret position. Inspired by The White Stripes' *Icky Thump* we're using a medium fuzz distortion and an octaver to round out the bottom end.

POWERCHORD ARPEGGIOS
BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO

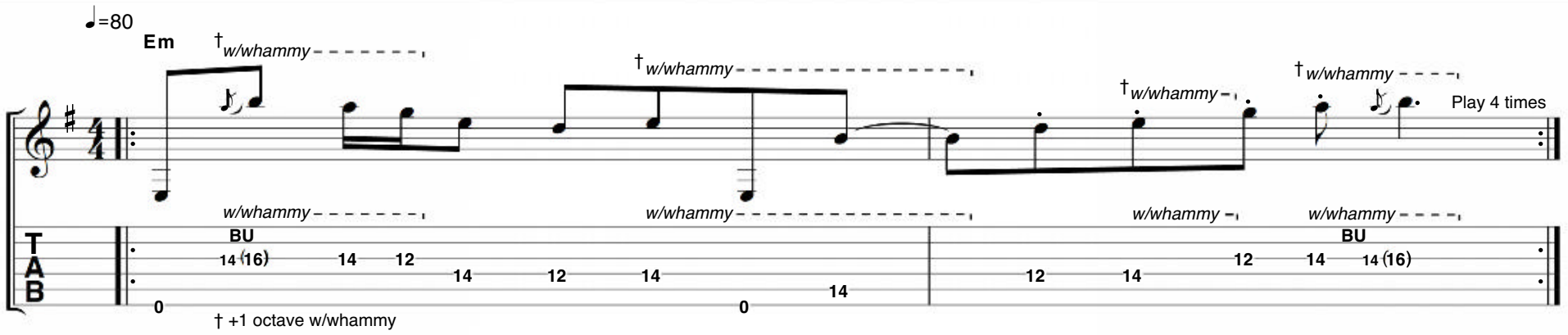


Taking our inspiration from *The Hardest Button To Button*, here we're looking at a simple idea: turning powerchords into arpeggios. If you have a looper and Whammy-style pitch shifter you could experiment by laying down a bassline underneath these shapes.

Guitars & backing Charlie Griffiths

WHAMMY PEDAL SOLO

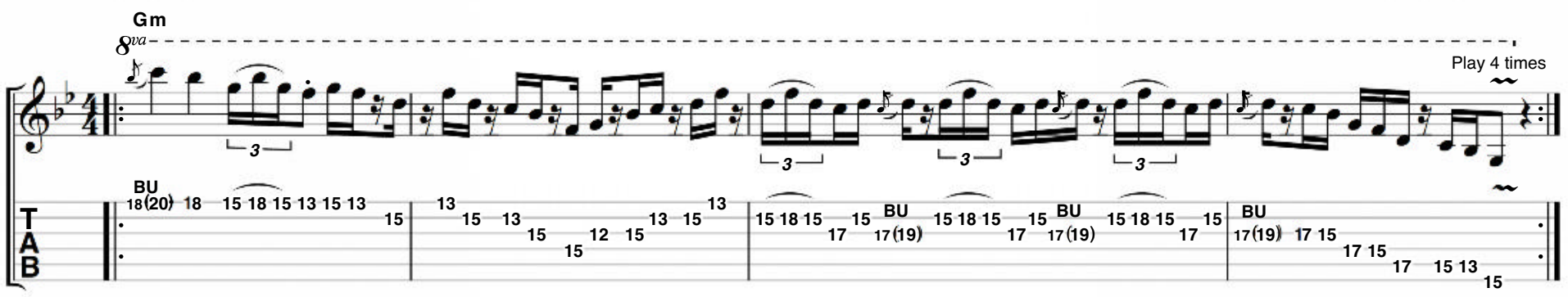
BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



Soloing with DigiTech's Whammy pedal is Jack's stock in trade. And, though the resultant lead breaks can sound whacky, Jack's note choice is often simple bluesy pentatonics. We've indicated in the tab where to employ your Whammy. Just remember to set it to an octave above your guitar signal.

BLUESY STACCATO PHRASING

BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



2014's *Lazaretto* is our inspiration here, where you'll find a mix of rapid-fire phrases and short, quick notes in a bluesy G minor solo. We've employed an octaver here. Unlike a Whammy effect, this is an always on pitch shifter used primarily to thicken the sound.

POWERCHORD BENDS

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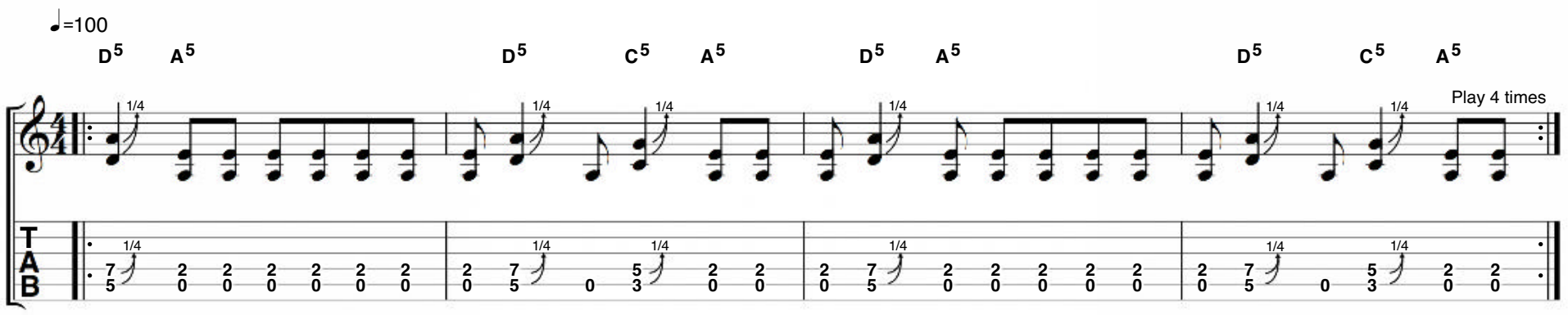
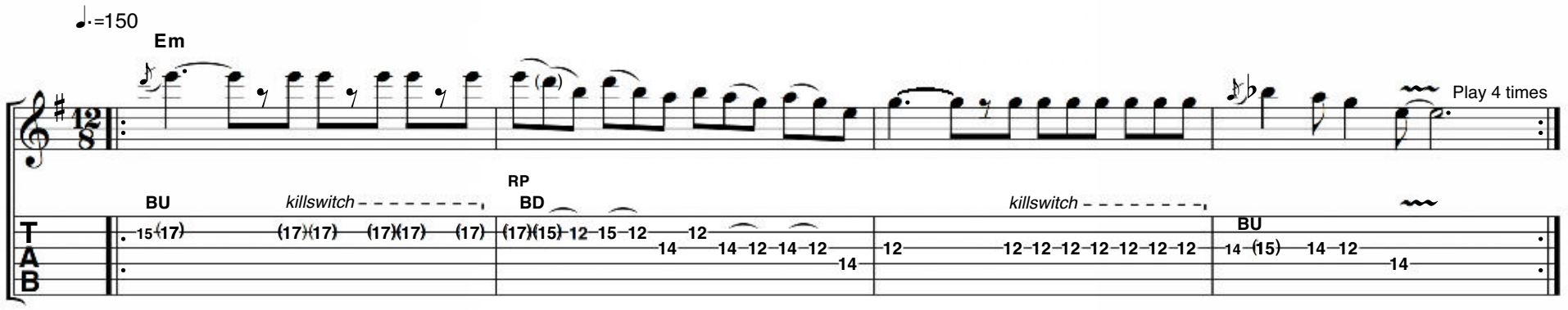


Play the D5 powerchord with first and third fingers here, and pull down a quarter of a tone evenly on the strings as you strum with a downstroke. It's a technique Jack applied in The White Stripes' *Black Math*.

STUTTER PICKED/KILLSWITCHED LICK

BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO



Traditionally, Jack created killswitch-style riffs using rapid-fire up-picking and fret-hand muting, known by some as stutter picking. Typically he'll use loads of fuzz distortion – the compressed sound exaggerates the dropout in the gaps, maximising the machine gun-like sound. More recently, Jack has used actual killswitches, as found in the Coppersound Triplegraph pedal and his Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster.

Words Charlie Griffiths

RIFF LESSONS

Get inside Jack White's playing style from past to present

Jack White has most certainly carved out his own niche in terms of both guitar sound and style. Be it with The White Stripes, The Raconteurs or in his own solo work, his idiosyncratic fuzz driven mixture of groove and note choice is easily recognisable. Most people would be happy with the commercial success of The White Stripes and the bona fide classic riff of *Seven Nation Army* which came with it, but Jack shows no sign of slowing down, with his latest *Fear of the Dawn* being his fourth solo album.

Here we're looking at a handful of our favourite White-penned riffs, starting with a classic White Stripes tune *Icky Thump*, whose ear-worm infectiousness will help you recognise the Dorian mode, the groovy *Lazaretto* to help you sit in the pocket. We finish up to date with the driving *What's The Trick*, which is a fantastic hand synchronisation challenge.

1 THE WHITE STRIPES
ICKY THUMP

Appears at: 0:40-1:04
Tempo: 95bpm
Key/scale: E Dorian
Main techniques: Single note picking, grace-note slides, powerchords

Title track of the sixth and final White Stripes record, *Icky Thump* features one of Jack White's most recognisable guitar riffs. The riff is based in E Dorian (E F♯ G A B C♯ D) and its sound comes from Jack's use of slides and open strings. After the initial open E root note, the next four notes are all played on the fourth string. Start by sliding up to 7th fret on the fourth string, then play 5th fret with your first finger, slide it down to 4th fret, then pull-off to the open string. Next, play three notes on the fifth string; slide into the 3rd fret and hang on that note before playing 2nd fret and the open string.

Next up is a G5 powerchord, which is played on the 3rd fret sixth string and open fourth and third strings. Now repeat the riff, but at 0:43 slide up to 7th fret on the third string, instead of playing the fourth string. Repeat everything twice and finish the riff with C5 and D5 powerchords with the root notes on the fifth string.

TG Tip: Use the underside of your fingers to mute the treble strings as you play the lower strings.

2 JACK WHITE
LAZARETTO

Appears at: 0:21-0:48
Tempo: 90bpm
Key/scale: F♯ minor
Main techniques: String skipping, funky 16-note picking, hammer-ons and pull-offs

From Jack's second solo album, the title track *Lazaretto* features simple funky single note riff similar in style to the classic *Cissy Strut* by The Meters. The main part of the riff is played using just your first and third fingers on the 2nd and 4th frets, and all of the notes can be found within the F♯ minor pentatonic scale (F♯ A B C♯ E). Start with the F♯ root, then it's octave, followed by the ♭7 E note at the 2nd fret. Leave a rest in between each note and if you keep your pick moving in 16th notes, each rest would be equal to two 'ghosted' pick strokes.

Next, play the open E string and repeat the three initial notes again, this time without any rests and add 4th fret 5th string before returning to the open E string. Finally replay the initial three notes including the rests. So far this is one cycle of the riff, which repeats three times. After the 3rd repeat finish with an A5, then a G♯ powerchord, then play a slow trill between frets 4 and 5 on the fifth string.

TG Tip: Keep your picking hand moving throughout the extended rest sections to help keep track of time and tempo.

3 JACK WHITE
WHAT'S THE TRICK?

Appears at: 0:04-0:29
Tempo: 95bpm
Key/scale; G minor / G Blues
Main techniques: Staccato picking, string bending

Jack is now on solo album number four, entitled *Fear of the Dawn*. The track *What's The Trick?* can be played entirely with first and third fingers, starting with three notes on the 1st and 3rd frets on the sixth string, and 1st fret, fifth string.

As you ascend and descend these three notes, keep the notes short and staccato by bouncing the strings off of the frets with your fretting fingers, in order to stop the notes; it's possible Jack has used a fast noise gate to make the notes stop more abruptly. Repeat this initial riff pattern eight times and try to make each repeat consistent.

Next, move up to the fifth string and play between the 3rd and 5th frets with a semitone bend from 5th to 6th fret. Then move down two frets and repeat the same finger, this time bending 3rd to 4th fret to hit the bluesy ♭5 interval and finally land on the G root note.

TG Tip: Get used to feeling riff repeats in sets of 'four', so you don't have to always count through every single repeat.

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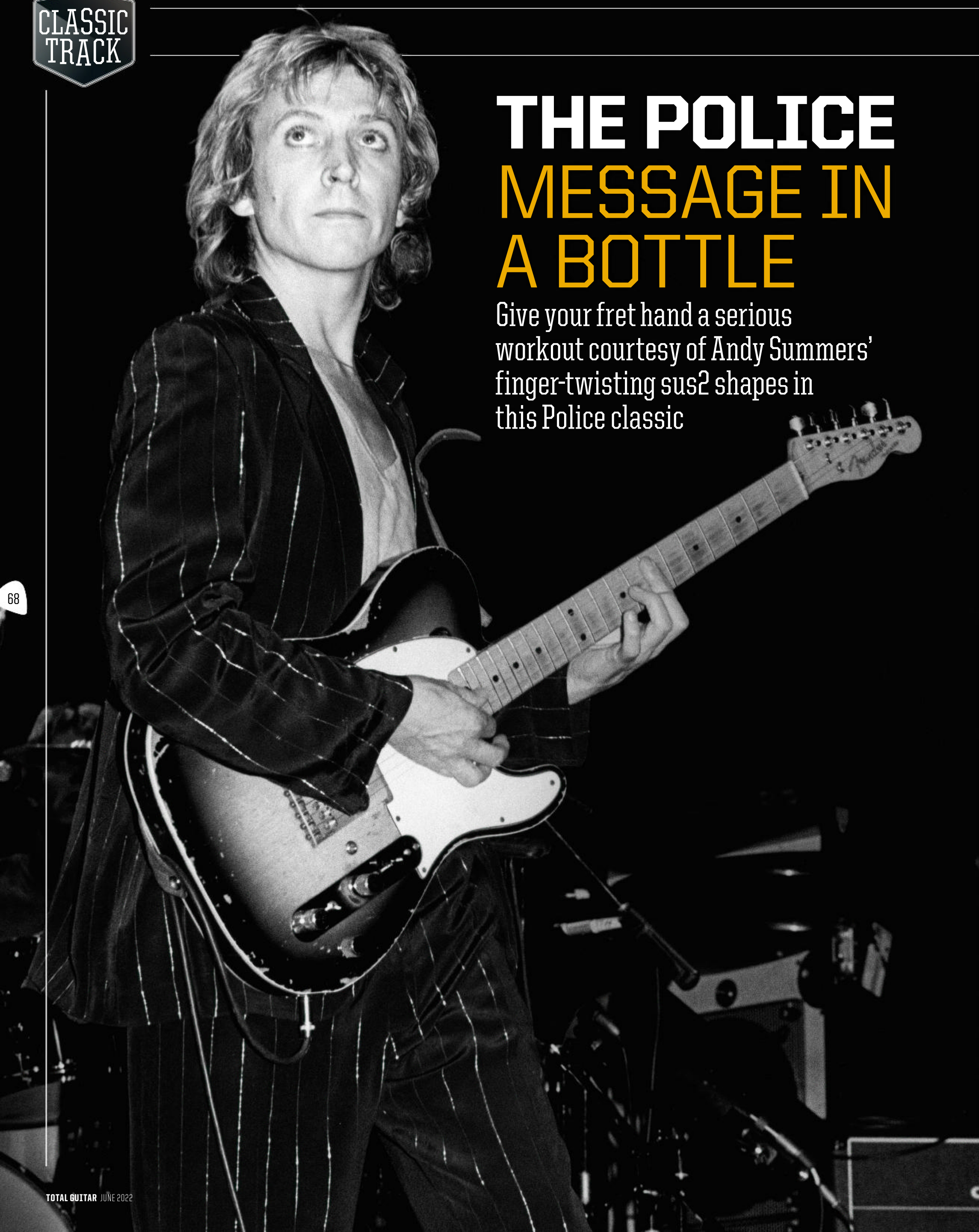
THE POLICE
MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Give your fret hand a serious workout courtesy of Andy Summers' finger-twisting sus2 shapes in this Police classic



Bursting onto the scene in the late 70s, The Police's highly distinctive and original post-punk, reggae-tinged blend of pop and rock placed them at the very cutting edge of the new wave movement.

The most demanding aspect of this opener from 1979's *Regatta De Blanc* album is the reach required to fret guitarist Andy summers' signature sus2 chord shapes. In particular, F#sus2 is quite the finger-stretcher as it falls low down on the fretboard where the frets are farthest apart.

The sequence contains no open strings, however, so you could easily practise the piece higher up the neck to gradually build your stretching ability.

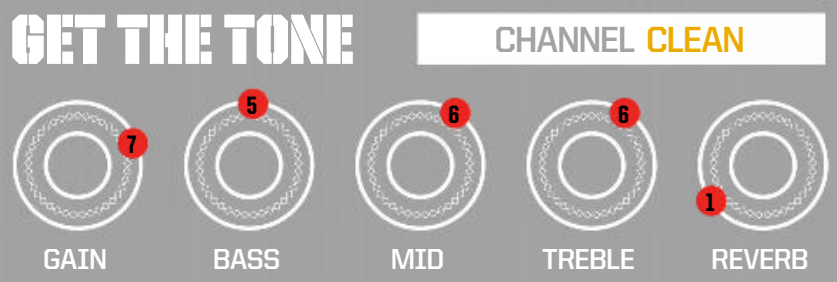
For example, try starting at the 7th fret so your first chord would be Esus2, followed by Csus2 (8th fret), Dsus2 (10th fret) and Asus2 (5th fret). Take it easy and don't stretch too hard, though – increasing your reach takes time and you'd be wise to take a break if you feel any discomfort.

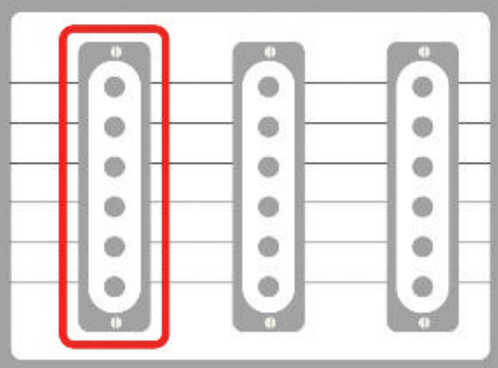
GET THE SOUND

Everything you need to know before playing 'Message In A Bottle'

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL CLEAN





You'll get the most authentic sound if you select a bridge position single-coil pickup, preferably on a Telecaster.

EFFECTS

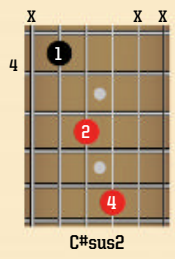
Flanger: Manual: 3, Depth: 5, Rate: 2, Res: 5,
Compression: Attack: 7, Sustain: 2

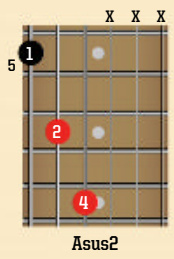
Summers was a one-guitar man in the early days, playing a 1963 Telecaster that had been modded with a Gibson PAF neck humbucker, an out of phase switch and a built-in preamp – though it's the bridge single-coil pickup he favoured for *Message In A Bottle*. He used an Electro Harmonix Electric Mistress flanger originally, but, assuming you don't have one too, it's worth experimenting with a chorus pedal to try and recreate the song's watery shimmer. A dash of compression will help too.

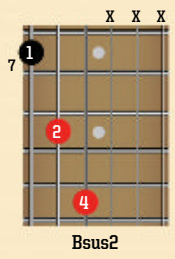
Amp-wise, Summers told TG he doesn't recall what he used in the studio, but Marshall 1959 Super Lead heads and Marshall cabs appeared in his live rig.

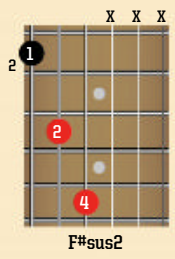
CHORDS

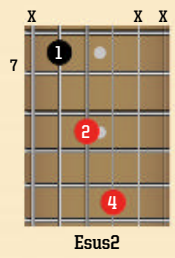
There's no getting away from it – the chords in *Message In A Bottle* are quite the challenge. Start by practising the sus2 shapes. They're all the same shape; they just start in different positions on the fretboard. Develop your stretch by practising the shapes higher up the neck, moving down to lower positions as you start to get comfortable. Once the shapes start to feel familiar try practising the changes.

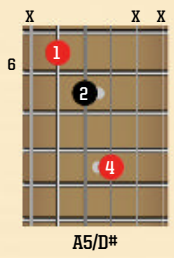

C#sus2

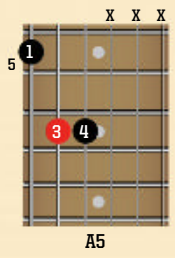

Asus2

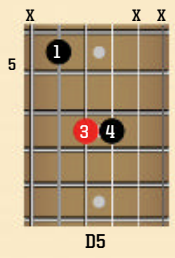

Bsus2

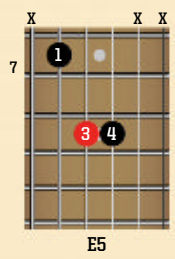

F#sus2

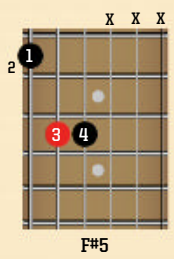

Esus2

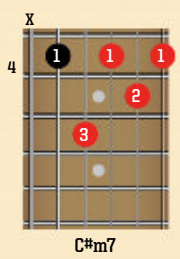

A5/D#

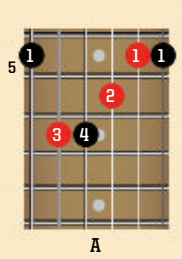

A5

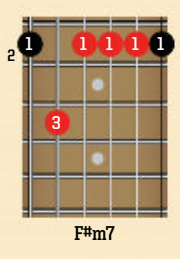

D5

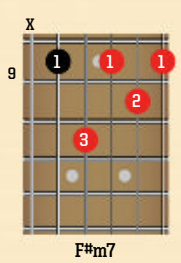

E5


F#5


C#m7

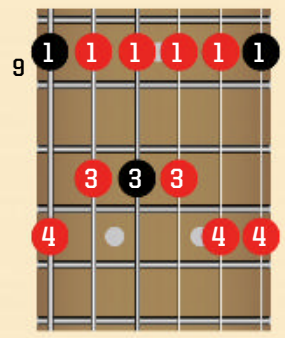

A

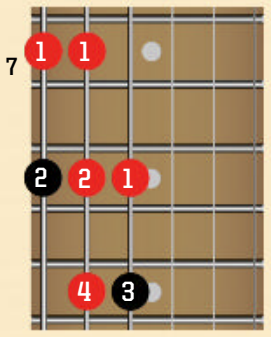

F#m7

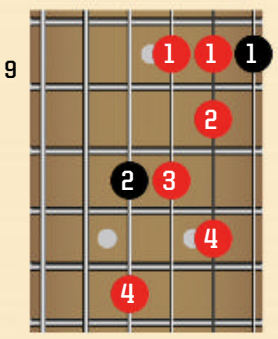

F#m7

SCALES

Andy's lead playing is expressive, but tight and accurate. Nearly everything he plays in *Message In A Bottle* is based around shape 1 of the C# minor pentatonic scale, with just brief moments in the other shapes shown here. Practise the scale shapes before trying out the tab to get a feel for how Summers puts his lead ideas together.


C# minor pentatonic scale


C# minor pentatonic scale


C# natural minor scale

Guitars and backing Phil Capone Photo Getty

THE POLICE
MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE
Music and lyrics by Sting
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THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Intro/Verse/Outro

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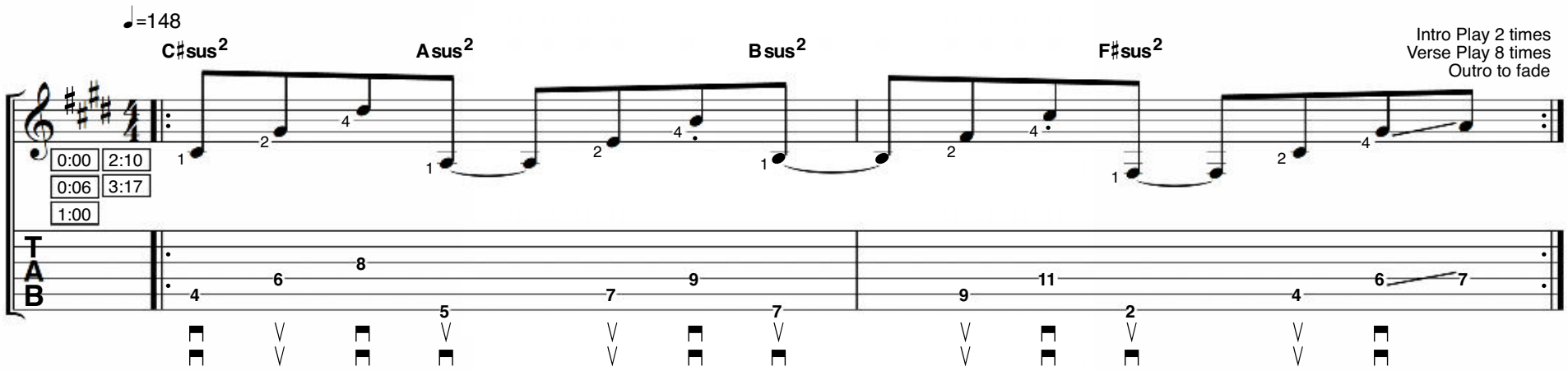

The sus2 chords in this riff are easiest when fretted with your first, second and fourth fingers. They are quite a stretch, so practise fretting the shapes first, before trying the position shifts and, finally, picking the strings one by one. We've suggested two picking approaches below the tab.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Harmony part

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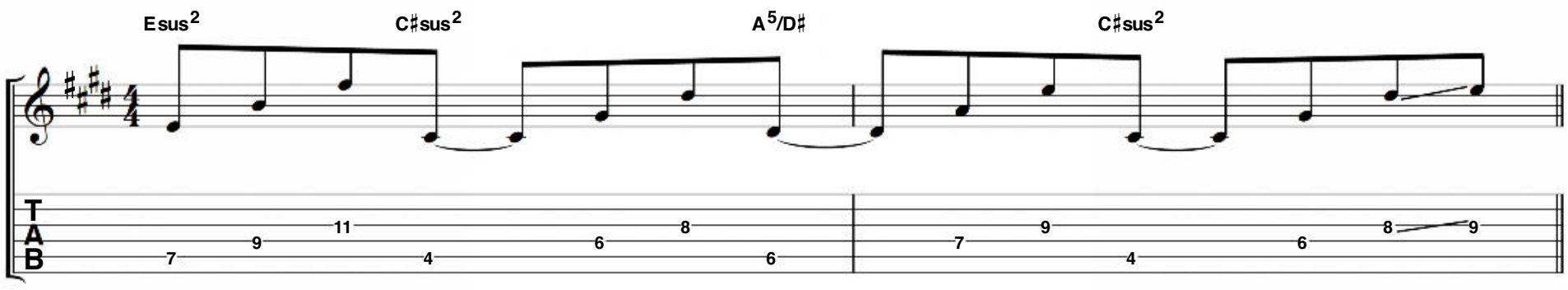

This part is played in harmony with the main riff and like the main riff, it is based on Andy Summers' signature sus2 chord shapes, so the same rules apply. With no string changes to deal with and played higher up the neck, we think this line is easier than the main riff so hone your skills here if you find the main part too challenging.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Pre-chorus

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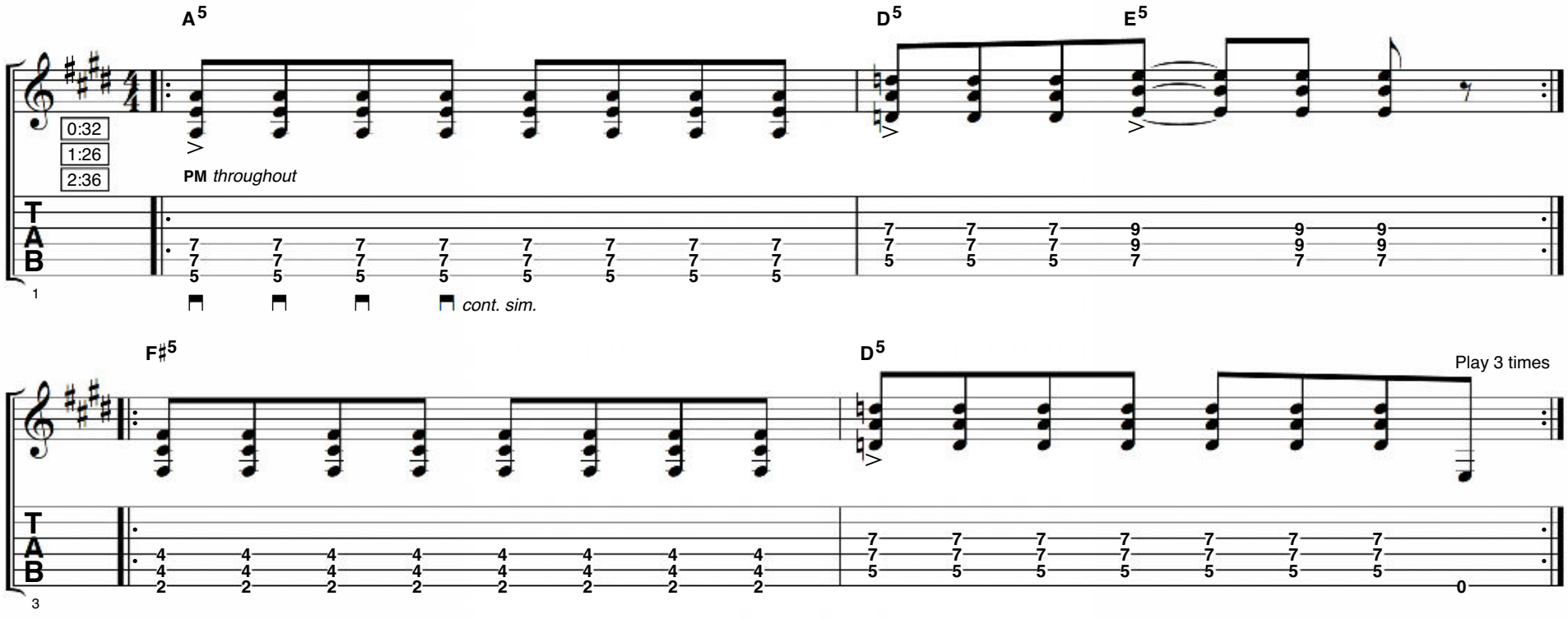

Straightforward three-note powerchord shapes are used here, played with steady downpicking and gentle palm-muting. The devil is in the detail, though; notice where the accent symbols (denoted by > in the notation) fall, and pick slightly harder to emphasise the relevant chords.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 1 (rhythm guitar)

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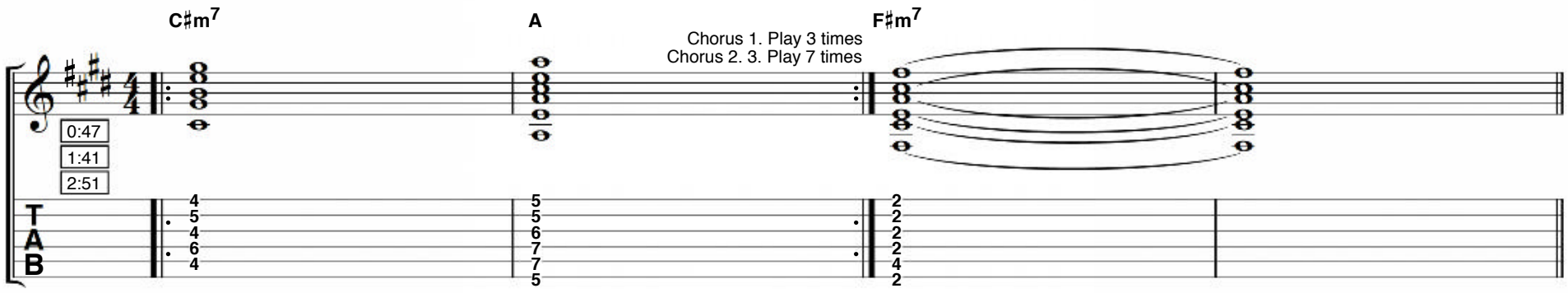

Just three barre chords form this simple chorus rhythm part – all you have rot do is make sure you strum at the right time. Drummer Stewart Copeland keeps the hi-hat and snare busy, so listen out for his regular, thumping kick drum to stay in time.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 2 (lead guitar)

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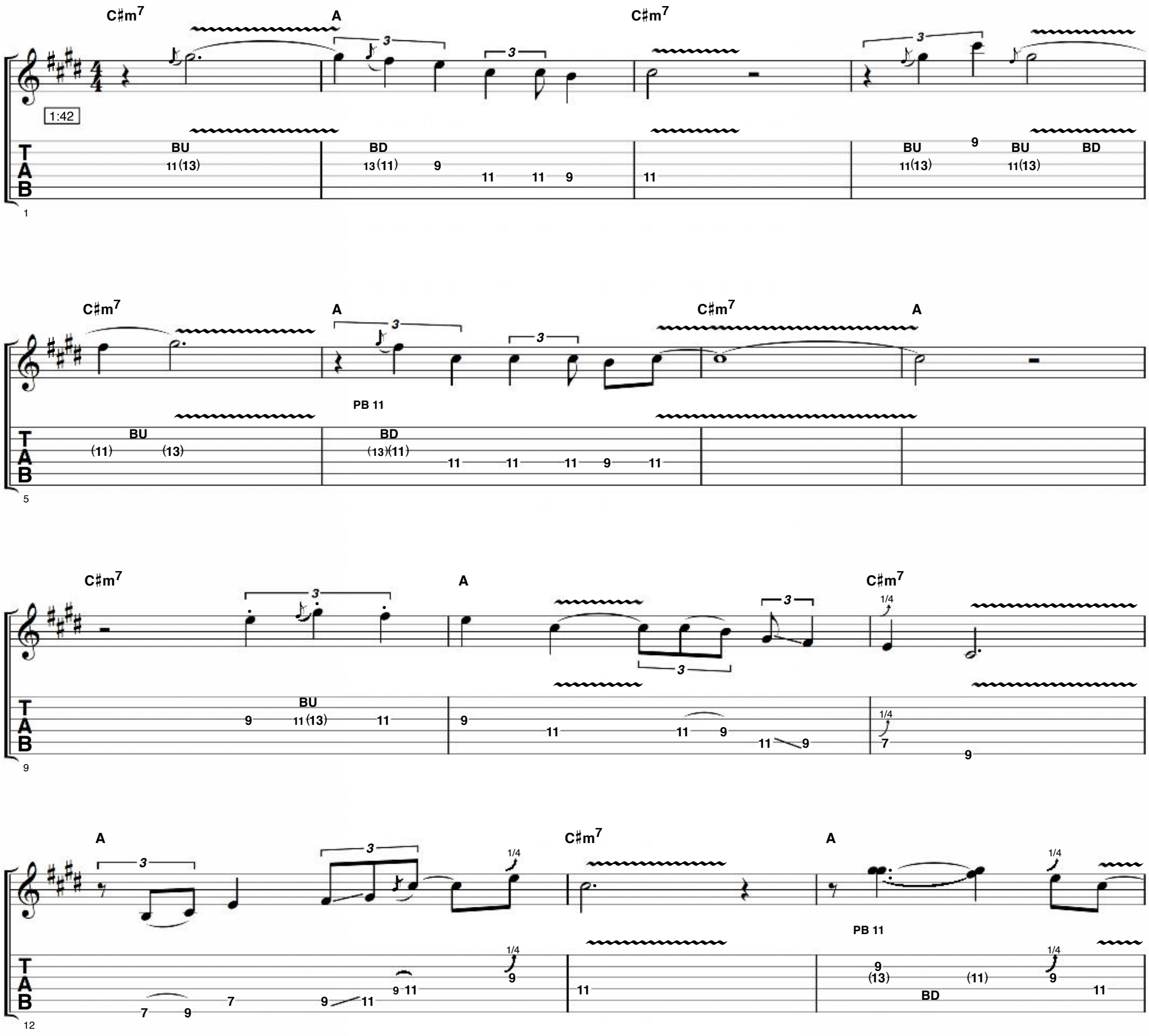
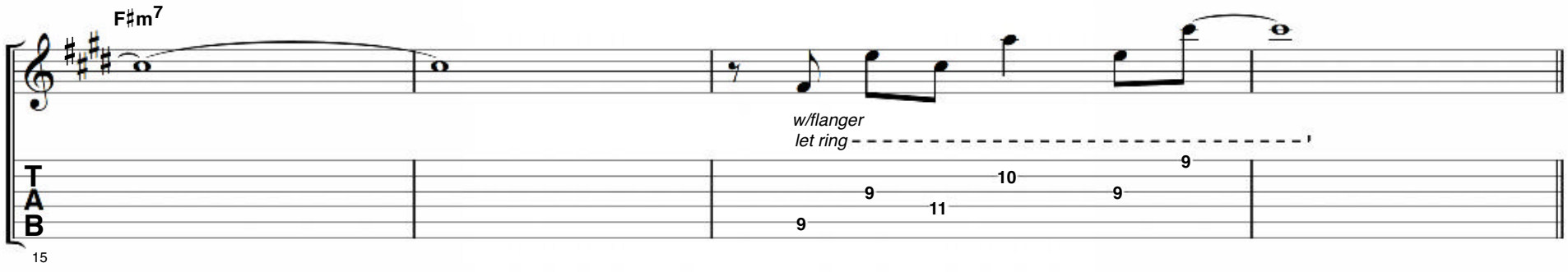
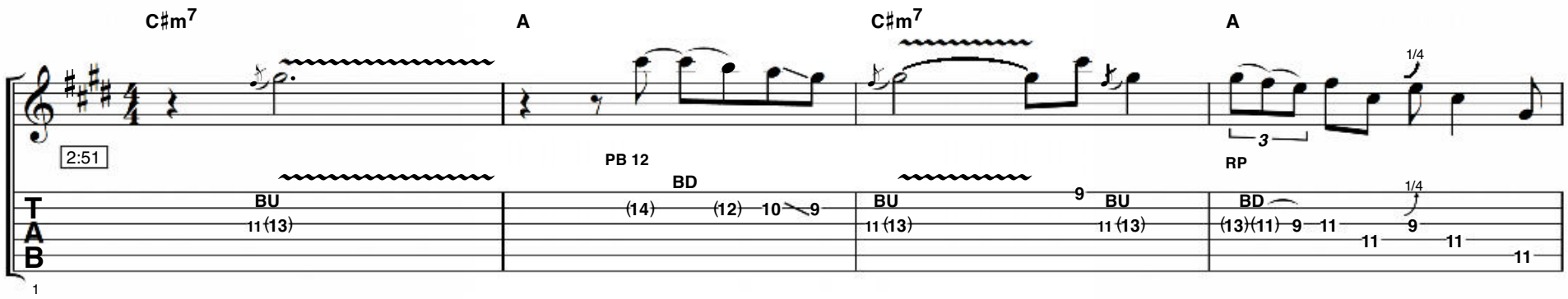
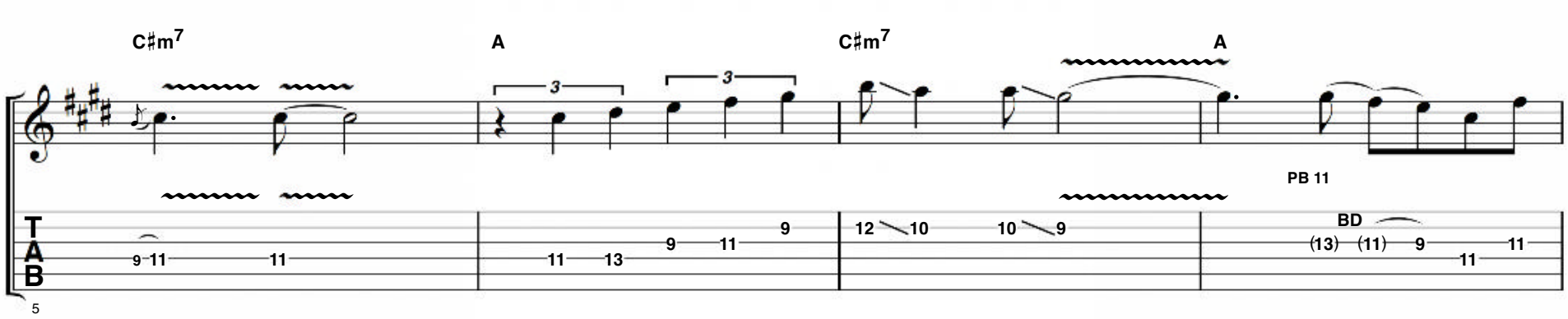

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 2 (lead guitar, cont'd) **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**

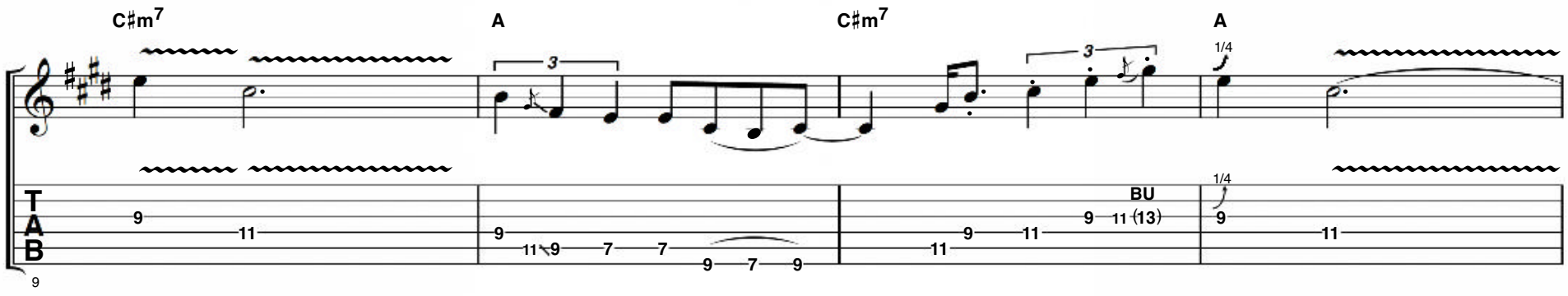


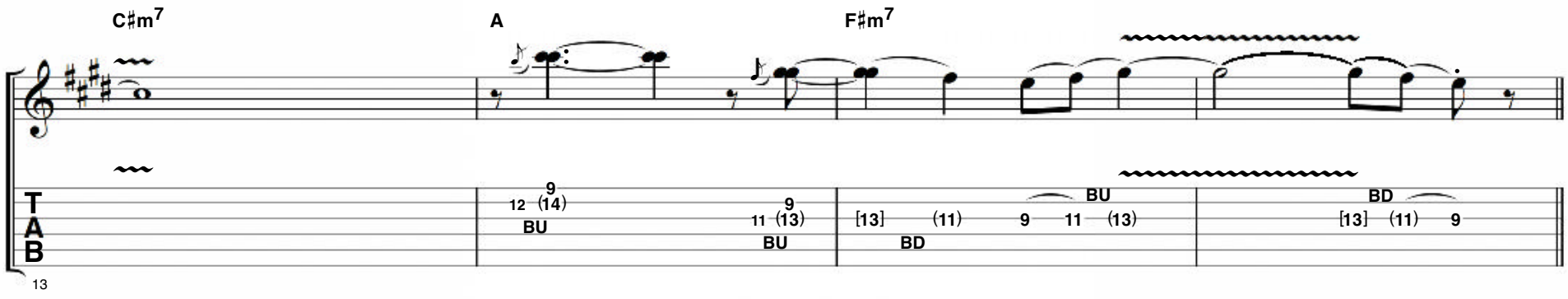
Summers' wailing C♯ minor pentatonic (C♯ E F♯ G♯ B) lead lines weave in and out of Sting's vocal here. Notice the regular use of triplets (three notes in the space of two – shown with a '3' and brackets over or under the notes). Bar 9 is the clearest example. You'll need steady timing for these

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 3 (lead guitar) **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**









You'll need steady fret-hand control to reproduce Andy Summers' tight but expressive lead work here. Use two, or, where possible, three fingers for the string bends. 'PB' denotes 'pre-bends', where you must bend the string to pitch before you pick the string. Practise these details before attempting the section in full.

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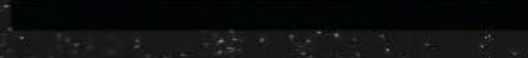

THE DARKNESS
I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE

Rockschool grant us permission to rock, with The Darkness' twin-axe classic

2003 saw Lowestoft glam rockers The Darkness propelled to stardom as their debut album *Permission To Land* topped the charts, and a raft of feel-good singles inspired by classic acts like Queen, AC/DC, Aerosmith and Def Leppard saw the band bring fun back to rock music. *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* was the band's third single – and it's probably fair to say it remains their biggest and best known track.

Rockschool's Grade Two arrangement covers the all-important opening riff, a verse and chorus, plus an abridged version of Dan Hawkins' main guitar solo (the song's second of three lead breaks). You can either play along with our audio or use the tab to help you play to the original track. There's enough info in the transcription to cover all the rhythm parts. Why not try improvising your own ideas during solo 1 and 3?

RSL Awarding the Contemporary Arts

Whether you're taking your first steps on guitar or moving into further/higher education, a Rockschool Grade will improve your playing ability whilst you learn iconic tracks from the world of popular music. For more info visit: www.rslawards.com

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I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE
Words and Music by Justin Hawkins, Ed Graham, Frankie Poullain & Daniel Hawkins.
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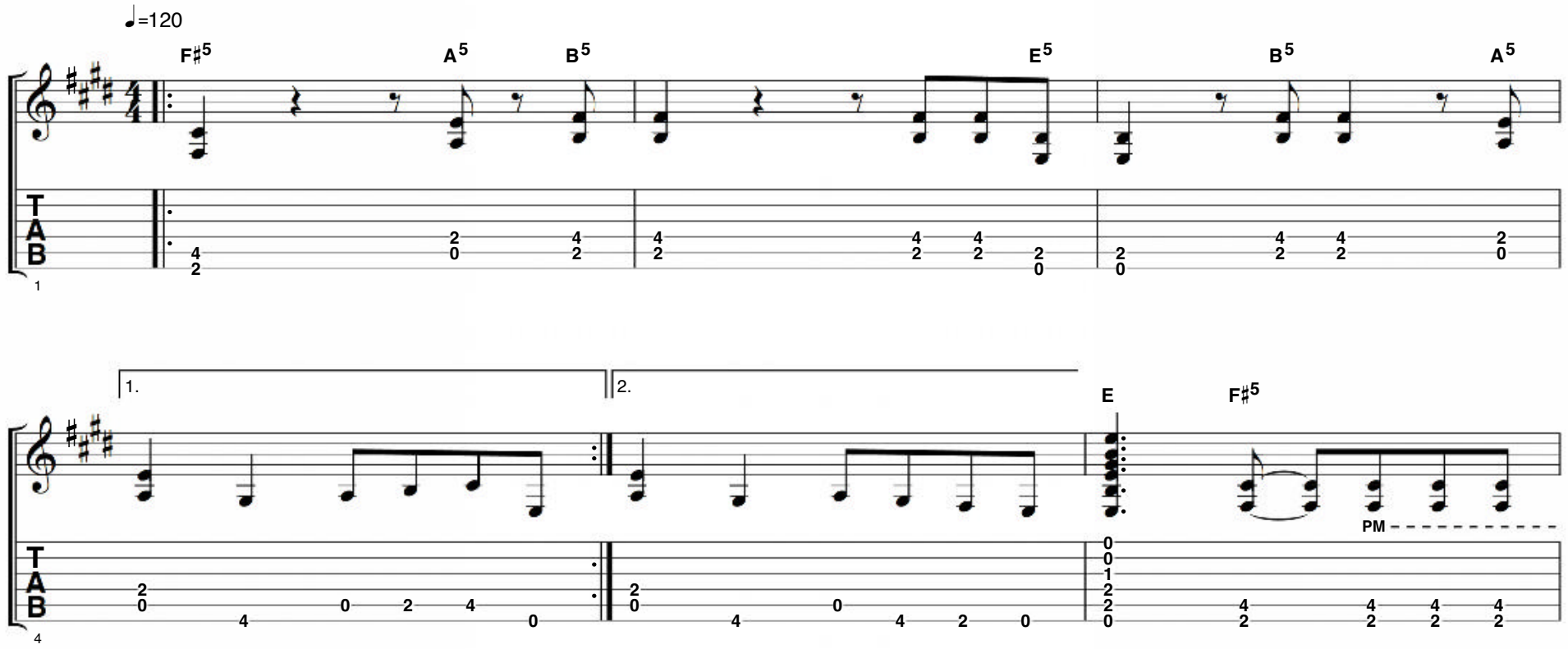
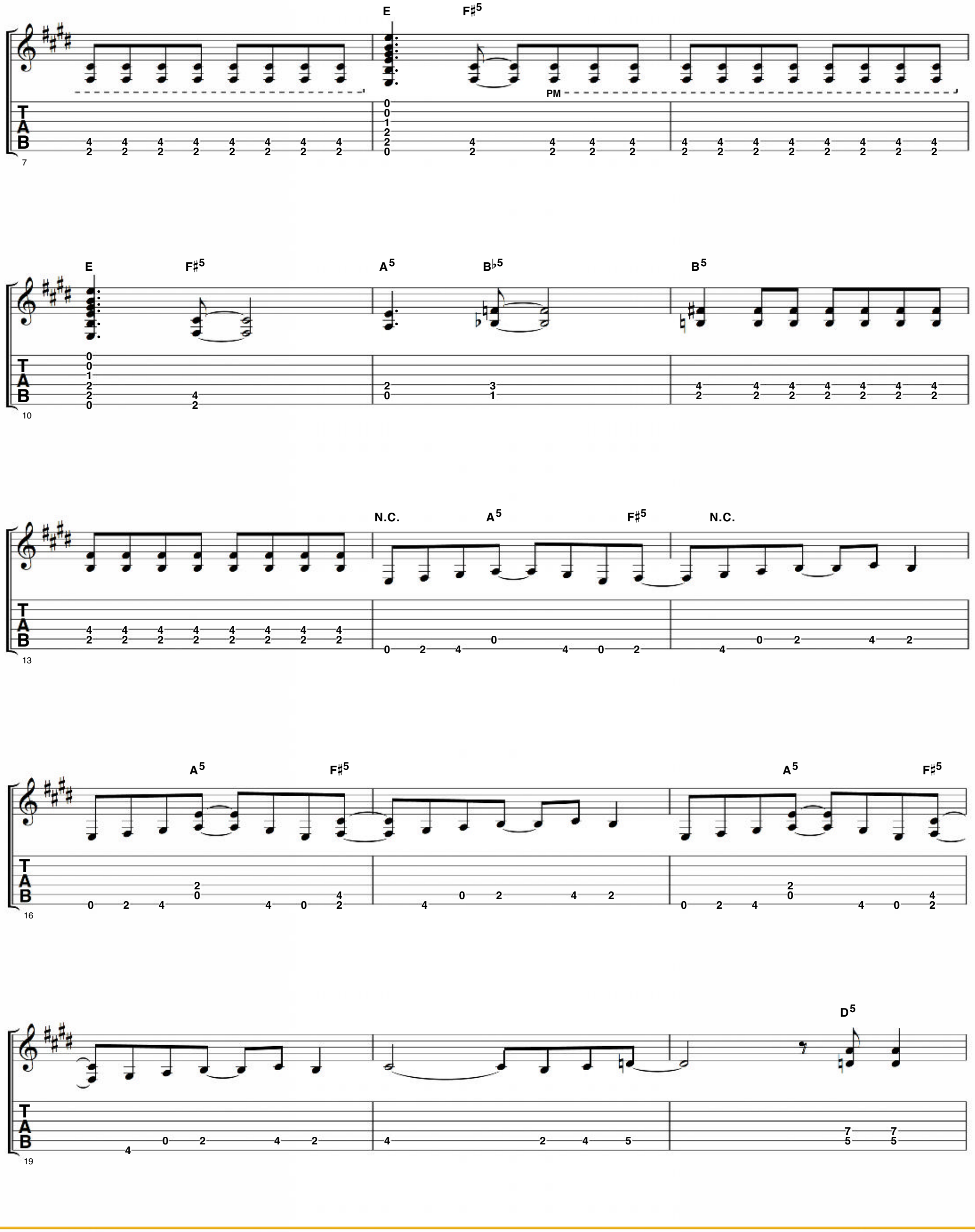
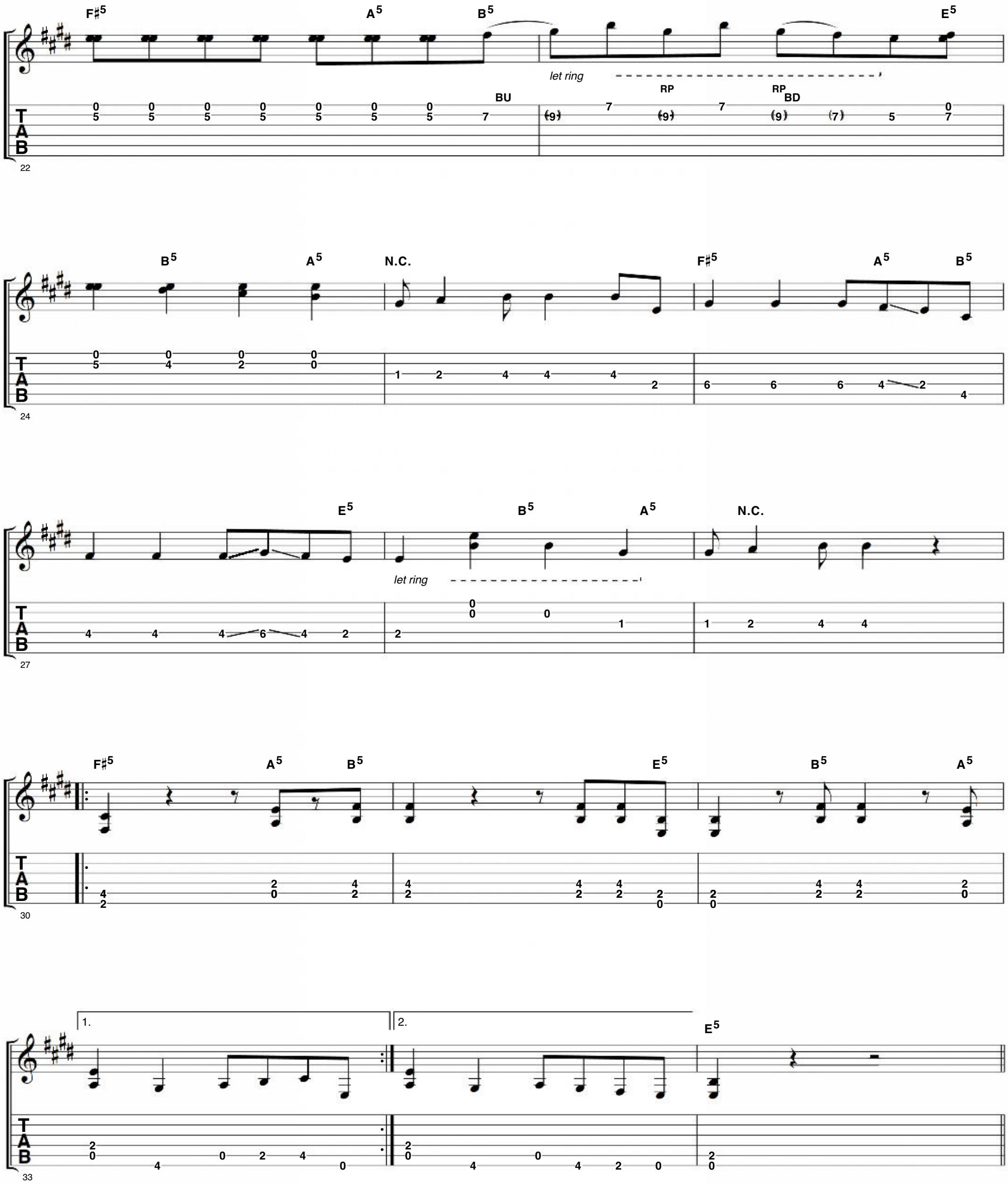
THE DARKNESS I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**



Words Jono Harrison Photo Getty

THE DARKNESS I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**

THE DARKNESS I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**

Try to play bars 1 to 5 in one position, with your first finger staying at the 2nd fret. This short section is a great study in efficient fingering – minimising movements to keep chord changes clean. The guitar solo begins in bar 22 where, once again, you'll need to focus on clean fretting. It's easy to mute out the open first string if you angle your finger wrongly. Aim to fret the 5th fret E note right on the tip of your first finger here.

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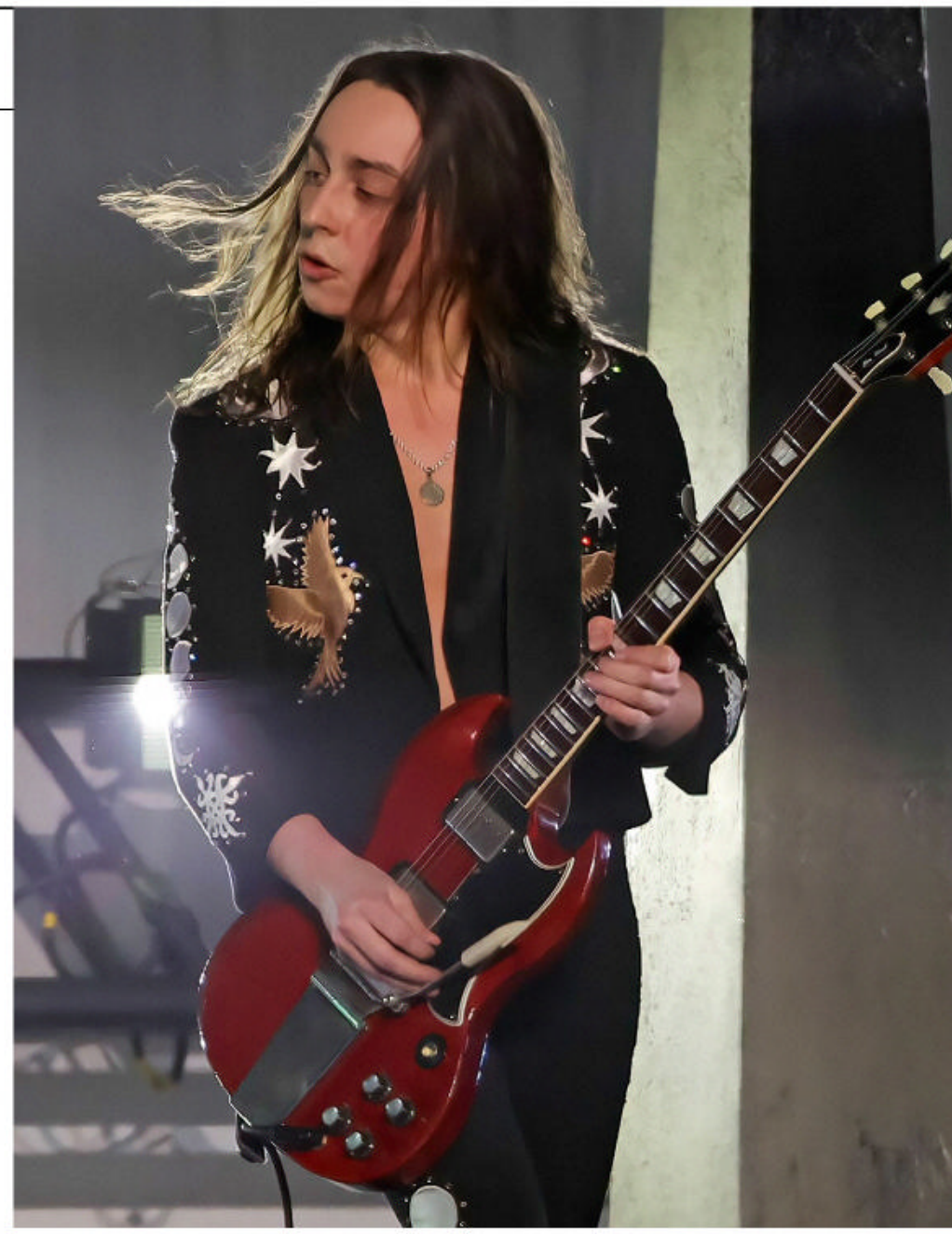
OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

GRETA VAN FLEET
YOU'RE THE ONE

Add this epic anthem to your repertoire in no time – a handful of open chords is all you need to get everyone singing along!



Formed in Michigan, USA in 2012, Greta Van Fleet is led by the three Kiszka brothers: twins Josh (vocals) and Jake (guitar), and younger brother Sam (bass). Danny Wagner completes the line up on drums.

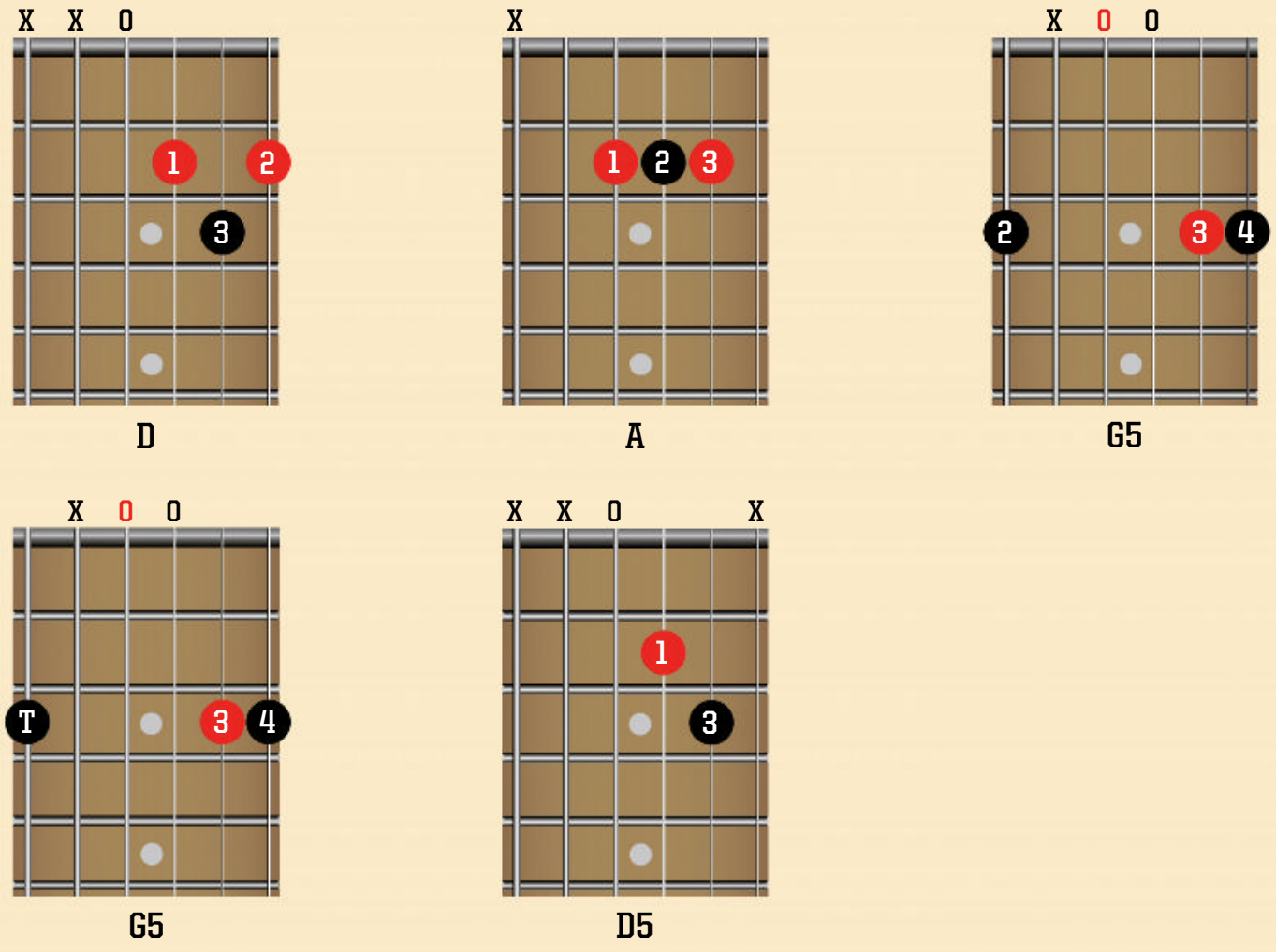
You're The One was the second single to be released from their debut album *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army* (2018), and you can play the whole track as a simple acoustic strummer using open D, A and G chords if you like. However, it'd be a shame to ignore Jake Kiszka's tasty guitar work. Our tab will help you dig a little deeper.

You could be mistaken for thinking the intro acoustic line was played fingerstyle but, in fact, it's tastefully and accurately picked. As such, it's tricky to play note-for-note, so make sure to practise slowly if that's what you're aiming for. You can get away with striking an occasional wrong string though, as long as you fret the chord shapes throughout.

CHORDS

To add the detail shown in the tab you'll need to practise lifting off and re-fretting your second finger (D chord) and your third finger (A chord) while keeping the other notes fretted.

Don't forget to try the thumb-over-the-neck alternate fingering for G5. You may find it's easier to add that two-note riff in the chorus. For the simplest 'strum along' approach, just use D, A and G.



YOU'RE THE ONE
Words and Music by Daniel Wagner, Joshua Kiszka, Samuel Kiszka and Jacob Kiszka
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Guitars and backing Phil Capone Photo Getty

BACKING TRACK (BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO)
This song comes with a full backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

You're The One

Intro
D / A / G5 / / / x4

Verse 1
D A G5
Babe, ain't no denyin'
D A G5
That I've got you in my head
D A G5
Girl, I'd be flyin'
D A G5
If you stood yourself and said

Chorus
D5 G5
You're the one I want
D5 G5
You're the one I need
D5 G5
You're the one I had
D5 G5
So come on back to me

Break
D / A / G5 / / / x2

Verse 2
D A G5
Babe, you're so young and pretty
D A G5
But you're evil, you oughta know
D A G5
Darling, ain't that a pity
D A G5
Won't you stand yourself and show
D5
Yeah!

Repeat Chorus

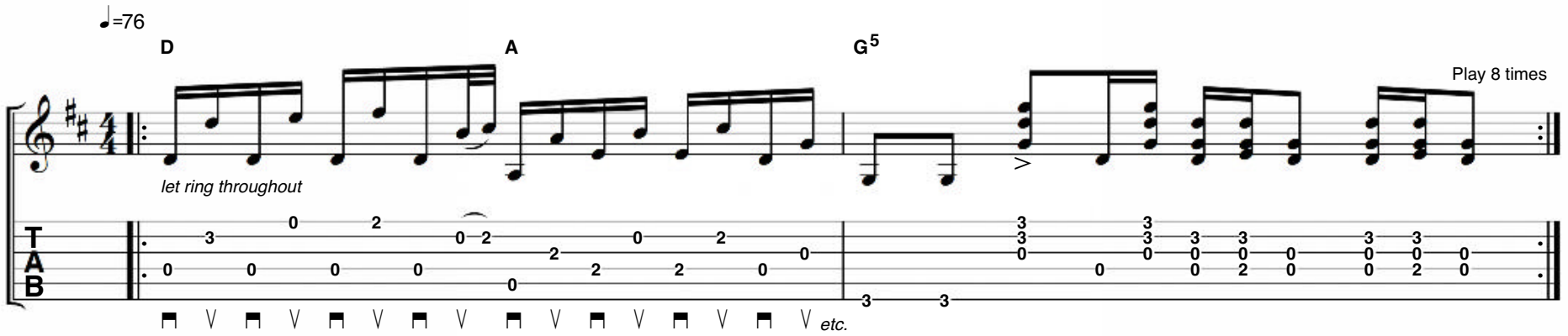
Organ solo
D / A / G5 / / / x4

Verse 3
D A G5
See, where we've been
D A
Won't you hold my hand and stay
G5
a while? Oh-oh!

Repeat Chorus x2

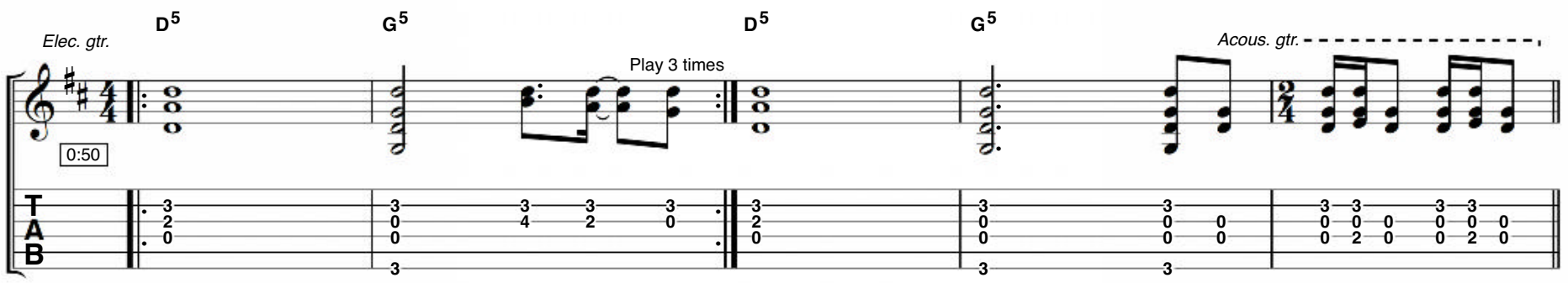
Outro
D / / / G5 / / / x4

GRETA VAN FLEET YOU'RE THE ONE Intro/verse **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**



Keep those chord shapes fretted throughout and don't worry too much if you hit adjacent strings with your pick (as long as they're chord notes). Use the picking shown under the tab – you'll find it's easier to pick out the notes shown if you use this pattern.

GRETA VAN FLEET YOU'RE THE ONE Chorus **BIT.LY/TG358AUDIO**

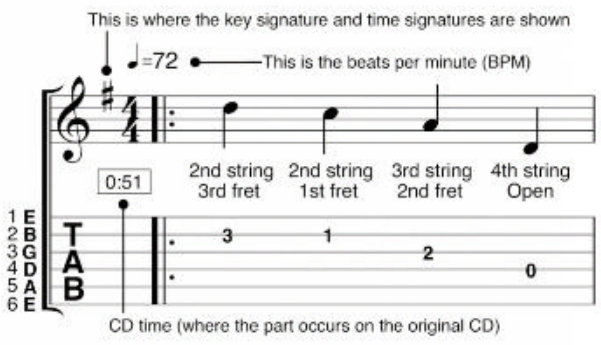


This electric guitar part works fine on acoustic, too, so you don't need a guitar tech standing by for a quick change! Check out the alternate fingering for G5 in the chord boxout, this will help you to switch effortlessly between chords and the riff by keeping your third finger on the second string throughout.

TAB GUIDE

Get more from TG by understanding our easy-to-follow musical terms and signs

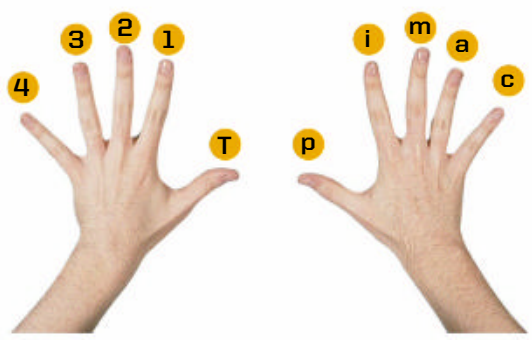
What is tab?



Tab is short for tablature, a notational system used to give detailed information as to where notes should be played on the fretboard. Tab appears underneath conventional music notation as six horizontal lines that represent the strings of the guitar, from the sixth (thick) string at the bottom to the first (thin) string at the top. On these lines, numbers represent which frets you place your fingers. For example, an A note on the 2nd fret, third string, will be shown as a number '2' on the third line down on the tab. Unfretted strings are shown with a '0'. The key and time signatures are shown in the notation. TG also includes a timestamp to tell you where in the original track you'll find each example and tempo expressed in beats per minute.

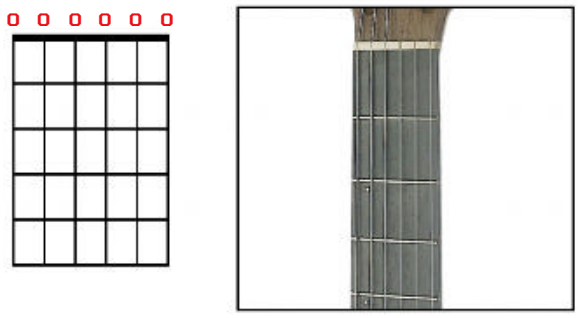
FRET BOXES: CHORDS, SCALES AND CAPO NOTATION

HAND LABELLING



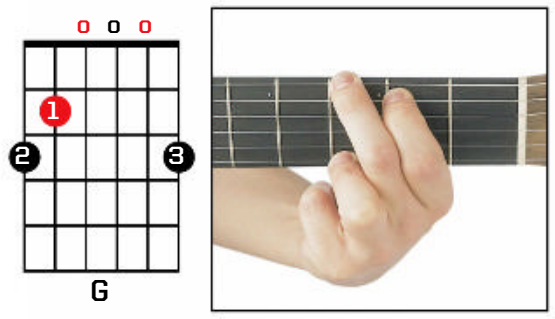
Here are the abbreviations used for each finger. Fretting hand: **1, 2, 3, 4, (T)** Picking hand: **p (thumb)**, **i (index)**, **m (middle)**, **a (annular)**, **c (little finger)**

NUT AND FRETBOARD



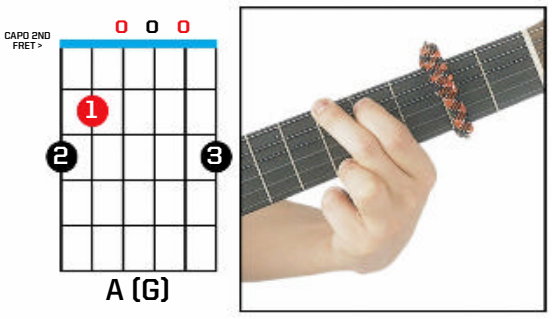
This fretbox diagram represents the guitar's fretboard exactly, as seen in the photo. This design is used for ease of visualising a fretboard scale or chord quickly.

CHORD EXAMPLE



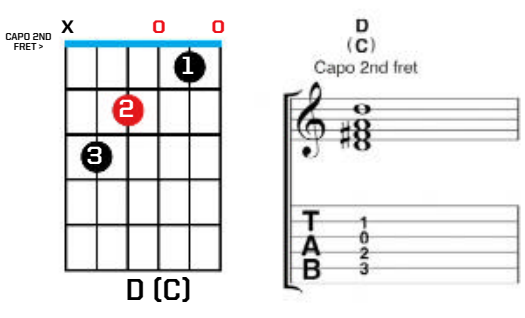
This diagram represents a G chord. The 'o's are open strings, and a circled number is a fretting hand finger. A black 'o' or circled number is the root note (here, G).

CAPO EXAMPLE



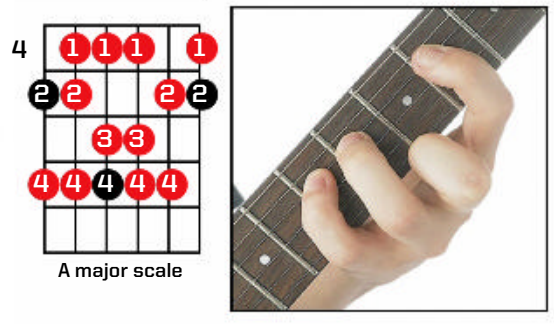
The blue line in the diagram represents a capo for this A chord, place it at the 2nd fret. Capos change the fret number ordering. Here, the original 5th fret now becomes the 3rd fret, 7th fret now 5th fret, etc.

CAPO NOTATION



Here the chord looks like a C in the tab, but the capo on the 2nd fret raises the pitch to make it a D. The 2nd fret capo'd notes are shown with a '0' in the tab as if they were open strings.

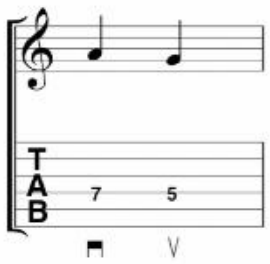
SCALE EXAMPLE



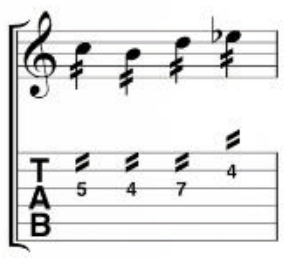
The fret box diagram illustrates the fret hand fingering for the A major scale using black dots for root notes and red dots for other scale tones. The photo shows part of the scale being played on the fourth string with the first, third and fourth fingers.

GUITAR TECHNIQUES: PICKING

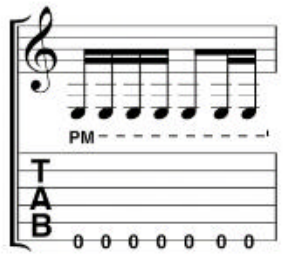
DOWN AND UP-PICKING



The symbols under the tab tell you the first note is to be down-picked and the second note is to be up-picked.

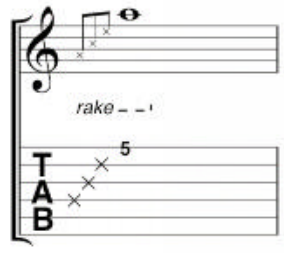
TREMOLO PICKING

Each of the four notes are to be alternate-picked (down and up-picked) very rapidly and continuously.

PALM MUTING



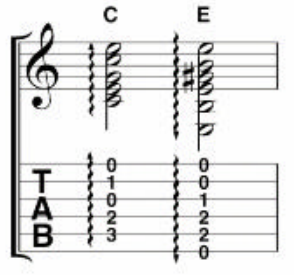
Palm-mute by resting the edge of your picking hand palm on the strings near the bridge saddles.

PICK RAKE



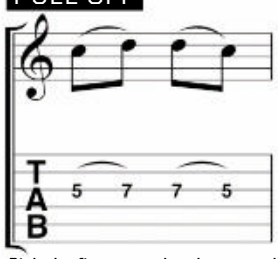
Drag the pick across the strings shown with a single sweep. This is often used to augment a rake's last note.

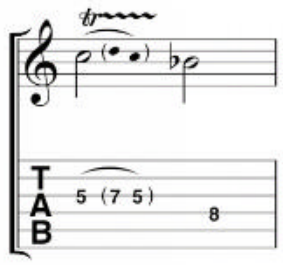
APPREGGIATED CHORD

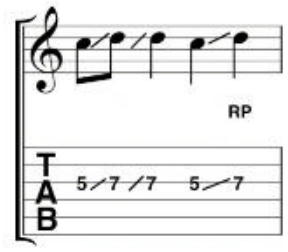


Play the notes of the chord by strumming across the relevant strings in the direction of the arrow head.

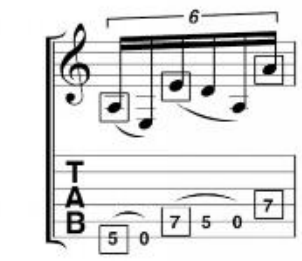
FRETTING HAND

HAMMER-ON & PULL-OFF

Pick the first note then hammer down on the string for the second note. Pick the third note and pull-off for the fourth note.

NOTE TRILLS

After picking the first note, rapidly alternate between the two notes shown in brackets using hammer-ons and pull-offs.

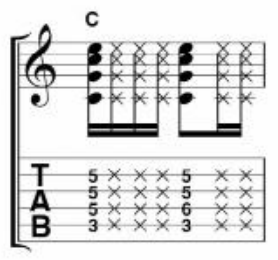
SLIDES (GLISSANDO)

Pick the first note and then slide to the next. For the last two notes pick the first, slide to the next and then re-pick it (RP).

FRET-HAND TAPPING



Sound the notes marked with a square by hammering-on/tapping with your fret hand fingers, instead of picking.

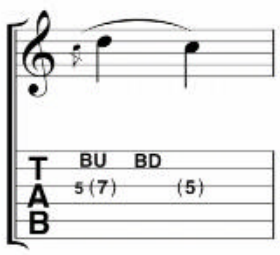
FRET-HAND MUTING



X markings represent notes and strings that are muted by your fret hand when struck by your picking hand.

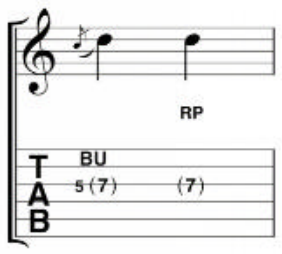
BENDING AND VIBRATO

BEND AND RELEASE



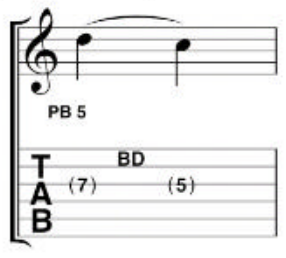
Fret the first note (here, the 5th fret) and bend up to the pitch of the bracketed note, before releasing again.

RE-PICKED BEND

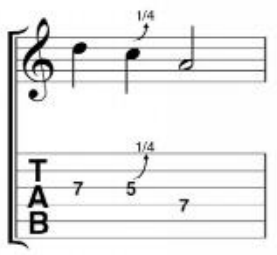


Bend up to the pitch shown in the brackets, then re-pick the note while holding the bent note at the pitch shown.

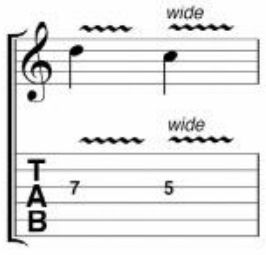
PRE-BEND



Silently bend the string up from the 5th fret (PB5) to the pitch of the 7th fret note, pick it and release to the 5th fret note.

QUARTER-TONE BEND

Pick the note then bend up a quarter-tone (a very small amount). This is sometimes referred to as a 'blues curl'.

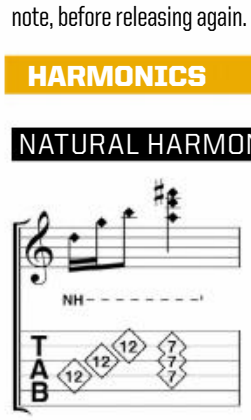
VIBRATO



Your fretting hand vibrates the string by small bend-ups and releases. Exaggerate this effect to create a 'wide' vibrato.

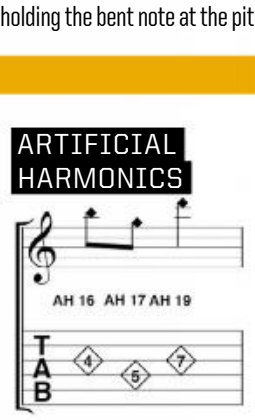
HARMONICS

NATURAL HARMONICS



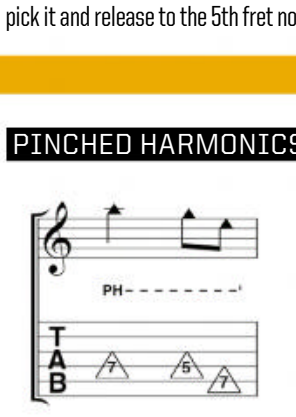
Pick the note while lightly touching the string directly over the fret indicated. A chiming harmonic results.

ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS



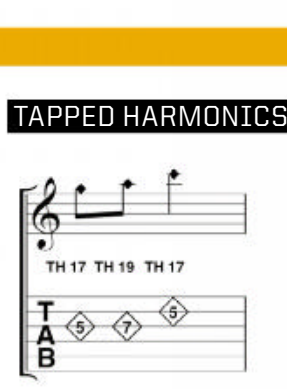
Fret the note as shown, then lightly place your index finger directly over 'x' fret (AH'x') and pick (with a pick, p or a).

PINCHED HARMONICS



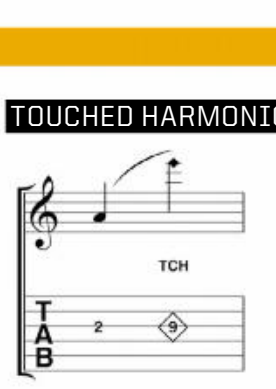
After fretting the note in the triangle, dig into the string with the side of your thumb as you sound it with the pick.

TAPPED HARMONICS



Place your finger on the note as shown, but sound it with a quick pick hand tap at the fret shown (TH17) for a harmonic.

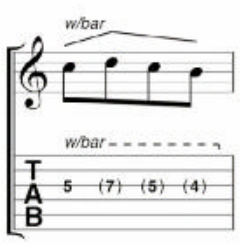
TOUCHED HARMONICS



A previously sounded note is touched above the fret marked TCH (eg, TCH 9) for it to sound a harmonic.

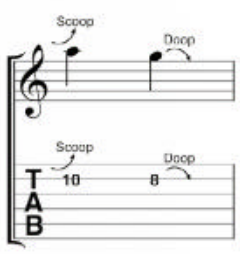
VIBRATO BAR / WHAMMY BAR

WHAMMY BAR BENDS

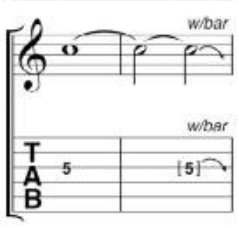


The note is picked as shown, then the vibrato bar is raised and lowered to the pitches shown in brackets.

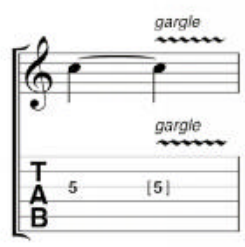
SCOOP AND DOOP



Scoop: depress the bar just before striking the note and release. Doop: lower the bar slightly after picking note.

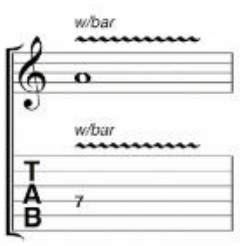
SUSTAINED NOTE AND DIVEBOMB

A Note is sustained then the vibrato bar is depressed to slack. The square bracket indicates a further articulation.

GARGLE



Sound the note and 'flick' the vibrato bar with your picking hand so it 'quivers'. This results in a 'gargling' sound!

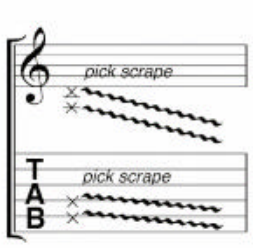
WHAMMY BAR VIBRATO



Gently rock the whammy bar to repeatedly bend the pitch up and down. This sounds similar to fret hand vibrato.

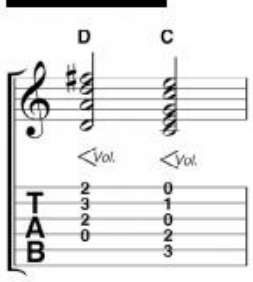
OTHERS

PICK SCRAPE

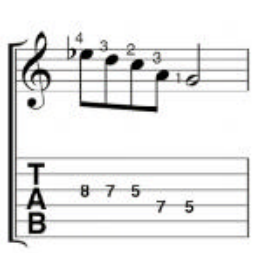


The edge of the pick is dragged either down or up along the lower strings to produce a scraped sound.

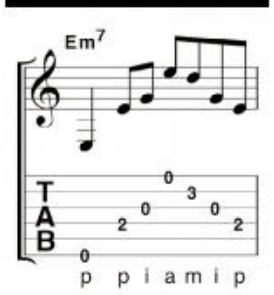
VIOLINING



Turn the volume control down, sound the note(s) and then turn the volume up for a smooth fade in.

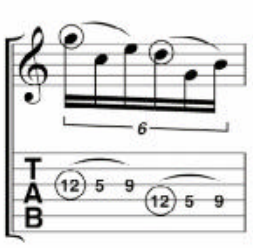
FINGER NUMBERING

The numbers in the traditional notation refer to the fingers required to play each note.

PIMA DIRECTIONS



Any kind of fingerpicking requirements are shown at the bottom of the tab notation.

PICK HAND TAPPING



Tap (hammer-on) with a finger of your picking hand onto the fret marked with a circle. Usually with 'i' or 'm'.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION
Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS
We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

***WHAT IS GAS?**
Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL
You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullsh*t-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT
TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS
We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD
TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

PLATINUM AWARD
Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.

Total Guitar PLATINUM AWARD

SUPERB, A BEST BUY | EXCELLENT | ABOVE AVERAGE KIT | SOME ISSUES | POOR

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Headrush make their play for the compact crown

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Naturally-voiced distortion – with or without gain

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START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

HARLEY BENTON MR-SERIES

1 The German brand has revealed its Mosrite-inspired models, with baritone and left-handed options, too. While the MR-Classic features P-90 pickups, the MR-Modern offers humbuckers with coil-splitting and a relatively premium spec, including stainless steel frets, 12" radius Macassar ebony fretboard, Wilkinson locking tuners and Wilkinson VS-50 II precision tremolo. The Classic's body is basswood, while the Modern's is alder.

MR-Classic £209, MR-Modern £293
www.harleybenton.com

BLACKSTAR JJN 3

2 The British amp and US blues heroes form a potent partnership, even when they go mini. The JJN 3 is a limited edition take on Blackstar's super-popular Fly 3 series, offering a two-channel, three-watt combo that can run on batteries, or mains. A Blues Power switch will get you in the tone zone, and there's global EQ courtesy via Blackstar's ISF control, tape-style echo and a speaker emulated output for playing with headphones.

£79
www.blackstaramps.com

KMA MACHINES WURM 2

3 The German effects company has slimmed down its spicy take on the Boss HM-2 recipe. In addition to Volume and Terror controls, four mini-knobs control a four-band EQ, with each band offering +/- 8dB of boost or cut. The Wurm 2 now offers three-way toggle switch for EQ options with original HM-2 style configuration, KMA EQ profile allowing you to adjust the H-Mids centre frequency via an internal trim pot, and a third combining the two.

£169
www.kma-machines.com

MAXON OD-9 CREAMDRIVE

4 Another pedal that adds its own take on a classic, the Creamdrive is a European exclusive edition of Maxon's acclaimed OD-9 overdrive – the pedal that reimagined the '80s Tube Screamer TS-9 drive sound. A semi-gloss cream enclosure houses the same all-analogue JRC4558D op-amp circuit as Maxon's OD-9 reissues with controls for Drive, Tone and Level. You can now choose between buffered or true bypass too and there's a reduced noise-floor.

£129
www.maxonfx.com

VICTORY V4 THE COPPER GUITAR AMP

5 Victory's V4 range of pedal amps now has three new additions with The Jack (formerly Countess), Sheriff and Copper. In addition The Duchess and Kraken have been given updates to include Two Notes DynIR technology, V.R.C. and headphone output. All-in-one valve solutions for stage and recording? All-valve preamp front end, 180-watt Class D power section, digital reverb, effects loop and three-band EQ suggests so. The Two Notes element confirms it.

£799
www.victoryamps.com

FENDER PLAYER PLUS METEORA HH

£999

A retro future classic?

Considering Fender's most popular designs are now elderly in age but still iconic because they were so well crafted at birth, the company has been pretty bold with them in recent years. The Acoustasonic fused the acoustic world with the electric Strat, Tele and Jazzmaster, while the Parallel Universe and Paranormal series have allowed Fender and Squier designers to have fun and surprise players.

The Meteora was introduced as part of the Parallel Universe series in 2018 but was no mashup of the previously familiar; it's a very different shape for Fender, and a bold talking point, looking like some vision of the future from the 60s or 70s. Now, after a standard HH Alternate Reality Mexican model in 2019, it's stepped up into the Player Plus line. Does it have the makings of wider appeal, or will it be remembered as an odd Fender folly?

> "A VERY DIFFERENT SHAPE AND A BOLD TALKING POINT"

It's a long guitar – offset taken to a new extreme in body on top of a 25.5-inch scale. That equates to a larger mass of alder, and an 8.8lb body weight. So ours is on the heavier side of the Fender scale. It won't sit on most stands either. And yet sat with it and standing with a strap, the Meteora feels balanced. And that comfort extends to another departure; a 12-inch radius rather than the usual Fender 9.5-inch.

Thanks to a flatter pau ferro fretboard here, bends are easier and chord shapes more comfortable. The Player Plus spec also afford 'rolled' fingerboard edges – subtle, yes, but they enhance the most crucial point of contact for the player and just make things feel smoother, and more familiar. We want rolled edges on all our guitars now!

We're still not overjoyed at rosewood's current status as a premium fretboard material at Fender, especially post-CITES regulations. For us it's a matter of aesthetic, not tone. Pau ferro can be lighter and streakier in grain, and that can be even less desirable with some finishes. But the hues are honestly attractive here, with browns but no lighter tan hues. It is still not superior to the darker rosewood for us, though, but alongside maple, pau ferro is the only option. A bigger concern is that there seems to be a small raised area of what looks like dried glue on the 8th fret between the A and D strings – a rare QC oversight at the Ensenada factory?

As bold as the body is – and whether you are taken with the striking Belair Blue finish it is very well applied – the headstock is undeniably Strat-like, and with that same 12-inch radius as the Strat and other models in the Player Plus line we're really becoming fans of the combination.

Whether it will tempt Fender players from 9.5" and 7.5" is really something only trying will reveal – smaller hands especially may find the transition unwelcome. But Gibson aficionados should definitely be giving this flatter feel a test – especially with the setup here as it's absolutely spot on

1 TUNERS
As is the standard with the Mexican Player Plus series, you get Fender locking tuners and the easier string changing experience that goes with them.

2 FINISH
The Belair Blue moves from a paler shade than Sonic Blue through to a tone darker than Lake Placid. Though we think it would have matched better with a maple 'board – likewise the Silverburst option with a pau ferro.

3 TREMOLO
The 2-point tremolo unlocked a world of fun for us – tuning was stable and the sustain this guitar has with the Fireball pickups encourages all kinds of experimentation with the trem bar.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple

SCALE: 648mm (25.5")

FINGERBOARD: Pau Ferro, 12" radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

PICKUPS: Fender Fireball humbuckers with coil-splitting via S1 switch on Volume

CONTROLS: Volume, Tone x 2, 3-way selector

HARDWARE: Fender Deluxe locking tuners, Fender 2-point synchronized tremolo with brushed steel block saddles

LEFT-HANDED: No

Gig bag: Included

FINISH: Belair Blue (reviewed), 3-Colour Sunburst (with maple fretboard), Cosmic Jade (with pau ferro fretboard), Silverburst (with maple fretboard)

CONTACT: Fender, www.fender.com

Photography Olly Curtis

The First Coming

What was idea behind the original Meteora?

Fender's Partrallel Universe models have been consistently interesting; guitars that could have existed in Fender's history that never did... now brought to life. The original limited run Meteora was a US model and took a leaf out of the standard Telecaster in the same way the HH model nods to the Thinline's Wide Range humbuckers. Designed by Josh Hurst of Fender's Research & Development department, the idea was to introduce an unfamiliar shape but with the familiar Tele configuration. "I think the guitar is more or less designed for people who are not traditional guitar consumers," said Hurst. "They're not into traditional guitar shapes – they want something that's a little bit different, a little more edgy – more futuristic looking."

for us. Low but still resonant; it's acoustically satisfying.

It would be easy to assume from the telltale offset pole pieces the pickups here are Fender's modern take on its Wide Range humbucker found in some Thinline Teles, but these are a new Fireball model. *Quelle est la différence*? Fender says they "blend the perfect amount of gain with great string-to-string note clarity", a description that would certainly fit WR 'buckers.

If you're turned off by the lack of chime and articulation with some humbuckers, these could be very good news indeed. Bright, crunchy and articulate with a heavy dose of Orange Rockerverb gain; the mids really ring out and it feels open, rather than compressed. That makes for a great neck pickup that won't get sludgy in the mix with chord work, and could well win some of the P-90 gang round, perhaps less so for those who want super chunk palm muting.

All of which makes the S1 switching fit in perfectly here – while the loss of low end is always noticeable when playing clean, there's none of the abrupt switch to thin overly steely tones that can give coil-splitting a bad rep. And wherever you stand on the look of the Meteora, the tones are highly likeable.

Rob Laing

> "A GREAT NECK PICKUP THAT WON'T GET SLUDGY IN THE MIX"

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

ALSO TRY...

FENDER VINTERA 70S TELECASTER THINLINE — £1179

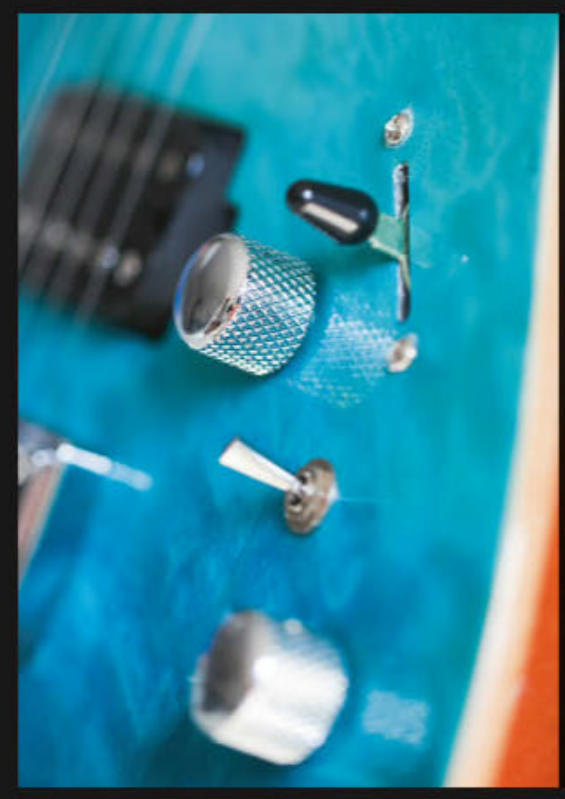
This Shell Pink option offers similar-voiced Wide Range humbuckers to the Meteora. But the vintage 7.25" radius maple fretboard and hardtail make for a different proposition elsewhere.

HAGSTROM FANTOMEN — £679

If they're good enough for Ghost's Nameless Ghouls, they're good enough for us. This 25.5" scale model also features Lundgren humbuckers with coil splitting.

EPIPHONE EXTURA PROPHECY — £799

The Explorer blueprint reworked: Fishman Fluence active pickups access PAF and single-coil tones and the body features the deeper cutaway of Gibson's cult Futura model.



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CATALYST
LINE 6

£465

LINE 6 CATALYST 100 1X12 COMBO

Tube or not tube? Line 6's latest has the answer

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Line 6's first product was the AxSys 212 combo, which went on sale in 1996, followed by the original POD a couple of years later, bringing digital modelling to the masses at affordable prices and changing electric guitar forever. Ever since, Line 6 have pushed the envelope, applying their technology to amps, effects pedals, guitars, wireless systems and more. Now part of Yamaha, Line 6's latest offering is the Catalyst – a smart-looking combo packing the very latest modelling advances into an interface that looks remarkably like a conventional amp.

> "A PERFECT MODELLING COMBO"

On the top-mounted control panel, there's a rotary selector with a choice of six voices, followed by reassuringly familiar knobs for gain, bass, mid, treble, presence and volume. There are also separate level controls for the Catalyst's boost function, on-board effects and reverb. Rear panel stuff includes a balanced direct output on XLR, an effects loop, aux in, phones out, MIDI in and a jack for the optional footswitch. There's also a USB socket that lets you connect to a computer for recording and deep editing using the Catalyst app. A power reduction knob accompanied by a variable intensity orange glow from the rear ventilation grille lets you select full or half power, together with a 0.5 watts setting for home practice and a mute setting, which leaves the headphones and direct outputs on for silent recording. As you'd expect from a relatively simple interface there's a lot more hidden under the hood, so a scan of the Catalyst's manual before plugging in is recommended.

The Catalyst organises its sounds into six banks, each with two patches, so in practice it behaves just like a two-channel amp. Rather than imitating actual classic amps, Line 6 call the Catalyst's six voices Original Amp Designs, while cutting-edge HX tech means they breathe and respond just like real valve circuits. The Clean voice is great with effects, while at the other end of the scale the Hi Gain lead voice has enough heat to weld steel. In between there's a wealth of great tone, vintage and modern. Our favourites are 'Boutique' (similar to an expensive handmade Californian head) and Dynamic, featuring an excellent touch-sensitive overdrive that can be controlled off the guitar, just like a classic valve amp. The effects also come from Line 6's HX library and are stunning, offering a choice of six reverbs and 18 delays, modulations and pitch/filter effects.

With stunning sounds, a very accessible interface and plenty more, Line 6's Catalyst 100 is a practically perfect modern modelling combo. It's ideal for home, studio and stage and priced to please everyone, from beginners to seasoned pros.

Nick Guppy

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

Photography Phil Barker

1 ROTARY SWITCH

The clever rear panel power reduction feature offers a choice of full power, half power, 0.5 watts for home practice and mute, for silent recording.

2 ROTARY SELECTOR

The Catalyst's rotary selector is used together with the selector button switches to program and access individual patches, banks, 18 effects and six reverb types.

3 THE LIT UP EFFECTS

The effects and reverb button switches are colour-coded to help edit the effects types.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Digital modelling, 100-watt 1x12" combo amp

OUTPUT: 12 programmable patches in 6 banks of 2. 100 watts RMS, switchable to 50%, 0.5 watts and Mute

CONTROLS: Multi-function selector knob, channel A/B select buttons, manual button, boost level with button switch, gain, bass, middle, treble, presence, channel volume, effects level, reverb level, master volume, effects select/tap tempo buttons, power reduction control

SOCKETS: Single input jack, speaker-emulated line out on balanced XLR, effects loop send/return jacks with mode switch, headphones output, aux input, MIDI in, USB type 'B'

WEIGHT: 14.5kg

DIMENSIONS: [HxWxD] 487 x 564 x 262mm

CONTACT: Line 6, www.line6.com

JET GUITARS JS-400 £169

Can a high spec and a low price tag co-exist? Jet Guitars argues the case

If you keep an eye on our First Look section, you'll have spotted the Jet JS-400 last issue. Jet has been around for a couple of years now having started in 2020 with founder and guitar builder, Primoz Virant heading up the design and specs.

We say design, but it isn't unfair to note that Jet Guitars – alongside many other brands in the lower price bracket – are highly derivative. The difference is here it's more of a concept, and seemingly one that is trying to squeeze in as many features for as little money as possible. While the prices of everything else in our lives are skyrocketing, ironically Jet is keeping things grounded.

Jet Guitars are available in a number of series, largely organised by body shape, pickup type, and finish. Our review guitar comes from the 400 Series which solely features S-type bodies, with an HSS pickup configuration. It's available in six different finishes including the Vintage Yellow we have here, plus a Sunburst, White, faded Pink, surf-y Green, and a relic version of the green finish.

Elsewhere, the specs include a roasted Canadian maple neck alongside a roasted maple fingerboard, with a rounded heel joining it to the body, plus there's a bone nut, and a two-point vibrato. We get a single volume and single tone control, along with a five-way switch, and the plastics are all off colour, too, taking away that '£150' feel from the guitar.

Now, we'll admit, we weren't sure what to expect before opening the box, but the JS-400 is a pleasant surprise. The neck feels like it could be attached to a guitar costing a lot more with its rich caramel hue, smooth satin finish and neatly finished frets. It's set up with an action that is pretty much as low as it can go before buzz kicks in, and as a result has a slinky feel alongside the highly polished medium-sized frets.

The fingerboard radius is a middle-ground 9.5-inches, with the neck described as a modern C shape. To us it feels a little chubbier which is either a good or bad thing depending on your taste, but it's a palm-filling all rounder.

Plugged in, it's a mixed bag. The pickups are Jet's own ceramic models, and while we felt the neck position was a bit plain sounding with a lack of that deep, neck-tone character, the in-between positions are where the Jet really takes off.

Position 2 gives you the full humbucker and middle single coil together, making for a pleasingly snappy, vintage funk sound that also has some weight, while the fourth position blends the neck and middle, revealing a bit of a glassy, hollow sound that has some added punch. The humbucker on its own with some drive immediately makes us reach for our alt-rock songbook, and this guitar evokes some of those great 90s doublecut/humbucker sounds.

We found the vibrato to be smooth, but did visit our tuner quite regularly – perhaps a case for a machine head upgrade.

What can you expect for around £170? Well, brands such as Harley Benton and Jet are certainly proving the answer to be 'more than you deserve'. It's not perfect, but then we need to consider the price. As an affordable, versatile guitar that gives you plenty of core tones, the Jet soars.

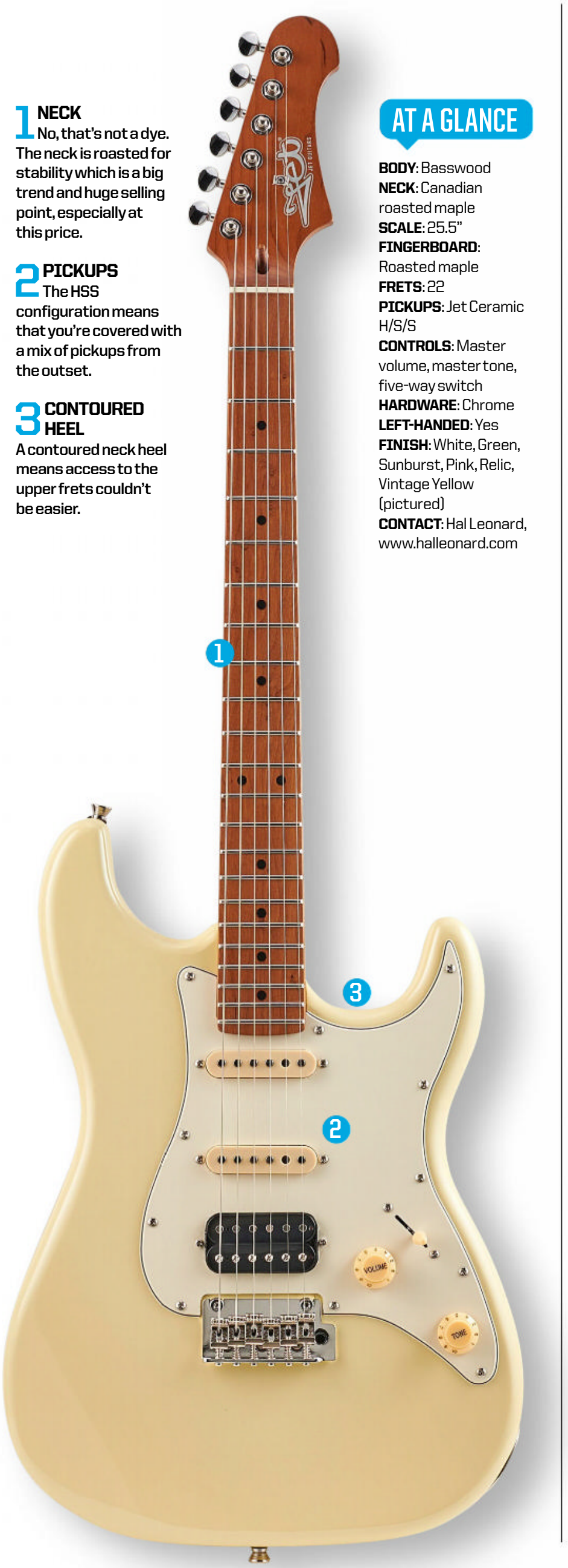
Stuart Williams

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

1 NECK
No, that's not a dye. The neck is roasted for stability which is a big trend and huge selling point, especially at this price.

2 PICKUPS
The HSS configuration means that you're covered with a mix of pickups from the outset.

3 CONTOURED HEEL
A contoured neck heel means access to the upper frets couldn't be easier.



AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood
NECK: Canadian roasted maple
SCALE: 25.5"
FINGERBOARD: Roasted maple
FRETS: 22
PICKUPS: Jet Ceramic H/S/S
CONTROLS: Master volume, master tone, five-way switch
HARDWARE: Chrome
LEFT-HANDED: Yes
FINISH: White, Green, Sunburst, Pink, Relic, Vintage Yellow (pictured)
CONTACT: Hal Leonard, www.halleonard.com

Photography Phil Barker

HEADRUSH
MX5
SAVE
TAIL
OUT
DT8 PURPLE SOLO
MULTI CHORUS
A VOLUME
ELVN REV
WHITE BOOST
GRAPHIC EQ
ELEVEN REVERB
DYN DELAY
MULTI-C
W-BOOST
3
-TUNER
2
(RIG/BANK)
-LOOPER
1
-STOMP/RIG
MAIN
PUSH TO ENTER
HEADRUSH

HEADRUSH MX5 £399

Headrush make their play for the compact crown

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

The flagship Headrush may be a couple of years old, but it set a new benchmark for realistic amp modelling at an affordable price-point. The MX5 promises to take all the learnings of the floorboard, and distil them down to a compact, affordable core. Does it deliver?

Our usual benchmark is whether we can get a decent patch going without using the manual. This proves easy, thanks to the touchscreen, and we're up-and-running with a great Klon emulation into a pitch-shifted delay in no time. Lessons from their previous products, and firmware updates in the intervening years reveal a much-improved UI that's lightning-fast to learn and quick to make edits. Complex chains are a breeze, with user-friendly tips for assembling mono or stereo rigs.

Once we've found the right output level, we find it as realistic as the larger Headrush, whether into reference monitors, or recording into a DAW. Disabling the emulated amps, we run it into a low-wattage EL84 tube amp, and find that it has no trouble pushing the amp into saturation with its overdrive and boost models. Like the flagship Headrush, the amps and cabs are flawless, and the flexibility of mic models is a pleasant bonus. However, it does suffer from the same issue as the bigger floorboard. Not all its effects are as inspiring to us as the ones found in competitor units from BOSS or Line 6.

> "A MORE POWERFUL BEAST THAN THE FULL-FAT FLOORBOARD"

The multi-function footswitches are assignable, making it easy to switch on and off effects in the chain you've assembled. However, this is also where the MX5's biggest drawback lies. You can assemble chains of almost arbitrary complexity, but unlike the larger floorboards, you can only control three effects in a more complex chain.

With the MX5 you can use the send/return loop to put in extra standalone stompboxes you may own. On a smaller 'board then, the MX5 could be used as a digital effect, amp and cab sim at the end of a chain. You could use the MX5 to replace a Whammy, delay, reverb and modulation, with control over all four effects. You could then place a standalone distortion or boost in the effects loop, and then have the MX5 also provide a virtual amp and cab to send direct in to a PA.

In conclusion then, the MX5 feels like a more powerful beast than the full-fat floorboard did on its original release. It's priced competitively, and can replace several pedals on a compact 'board. For players assembling complex but static chains it might even replace a whole pedalboard, but whether it can for all players is doubtful.

Alex Lynham

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

1 TOUCHSCREEN
The 4" touchscreen makes editing chains a breeze.

2 EXPRESSION PEDAL
The expression pedal is assignable on a per-patch basis, and can even be used to edit parameters on the fly.

3 USB SOCKET
The MX5 can be used as a recording interface and re-amp box via USB.

AT A GLANCE

SCREEN: 4" touch screen
FOOTSWITCHES: 3
EXPRESSION PEDAL
LOOPER
AMP MODELS: 50
CAB MODELS: 15
VIRTUAL MICS: 10
IRS: 300
FX: 65
CONTACT: Headrush, www.headrushfx.com

Photography Phil Barker

MAESTRO INVADER DISTORTION

£139

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Naturally-voiced distortion – with or without gain

One of five new pedals recently released as part of Gibson's Maestro range, the Invader Distortion can operate with or without an internal noise gate engaged and follows the classic distortion pedal format of Gain, Level and Tone knobs.

With Gain set to its minimum there's actually very nice just-beyond-clean overdrive with unity gain at around midday on the Level knob, leaving plenty left if you want to bring a boost on with it. Advancing the Gain knob minimally you'll find more low-level raunchy drive but it doesn't take long until you are getting into the fully-cranked stack sounds and then on into high gain distortion, full of sustain and easily squeezed out harmonics.

The pedal's overall voicing is very natural, with no obviously hyped or subdued frequencies, and the Tone knob is practical – nothing extreme, it just keeps the pedal's core tone and sets the degree of brightness where you need it – we couldn't dial in a bad sound anywhere on its arc of travel.

All that hi-gain stuff doesn't come without a degree of hiss of course, but that can be eliminated when you are not playing by switching in the Noise Gate which has an internal trim pot to set the threshold at which it kicks in. Straight out of the box that is set to a median position, but is easily altered by lowering the baseplate and getting stuck in with a small crosshead screwdriver to lower or raise it, its ideal position depending on where you set the Gain knob and your playing style. A tweak to a higher threshold suited us perfectly but it may take some experimentation to get it exactly where you need it.

It's the icing on the cake to what is a great source of amp-style distortion.

Trevor Curwen

> "THE VOICING IS NATURAL WITH NO SUBDUED FREQUENCIES"

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

AT A GLANCE

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Drive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Gain, Level, Tone, Hi/Lo switch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-12V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 84 (w) x 126 (d) x 60 mm (h)

CONTACT: Maestro, www.maestroelectronics.com

XS Wireless IEM

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Words Ellie Rogers **Photo** Owen Lehman

NICK COGAN
DRUG CHURCH

Nick Cogan, one of two guitarists in US post-hardcore band Drug Church, has a pithy description of their new album *Hygiene*, a potent mix of melodic earworms and combustible riffs. "It's catchy music through the lens of chainsaw guitars!" he says.

In his youth, Nick's interest in the guitar was sparked by hearing Billie Joe Armstrong's chunky, angular playing on Green Day's breakout record *Dookie*, and its influence still looms large on his playing. In true punk rock style, *Hygiene* – the fourth album from the New York State quartet – clocks in at a lean 26 minutes, with only a minority of its tracks crashing up to the three minute mark. Explains Nick, "My least favourite thing is listening to a song that I like, and being like, 'That was great!' but then there's still a minute and a half left. So, no filler. There's no need." He also writes guitar parts long before lyrics are even considered (most of which vocalist Patrick Kindlon lays down under pressure in the studio), imbuing a vital, no-nonsense energy to the Drug Church sound. His mantra is simple: "I try not to overthink it".

When it comes to guitars, Nick loves Fender Jazzmasters, and has vintage ones for home and studio use, and two new Custom Shop models for enduring the wear and tear of touring. "I was a Les Paul guy growing up for years and years," he explains. "Then, like anyone else involved in alternative music, I found out about Television, Dinosaur Jr., Sonic Youth and all that cool stuff – so the look of Jazzmasters was initially what got me." Beyond appearances, Nick approves of their simple configuration with singular volume and tone controls and, as a rule, he avoids messing about with the rhythm circuit.

Favouring solid-state amps, Nick has long depended on Roland Jazz Choruses, and he runs two for live shows: one with the chorus on and the other without. "It's The Smiths and The Cure amp – and the Metallica clean tone," he explains. "They're so bright and loud that they take to overdrive pedals better than any amp I've ever encountered." Into these, he runs an Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer that he's owned for about 15 years, and an old Pro Co RAT distortion pedal, which he normally has cranked. "Anyone can recreate my sound very easily if they have those three things," he says.

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